TIGER WINGS A CHANOD STORY BY GEORGES SURDEZ

15¢

Adventure

JULY

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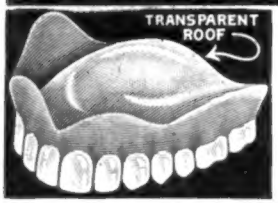

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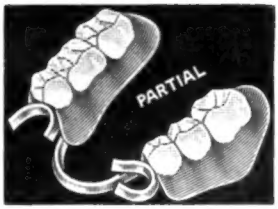

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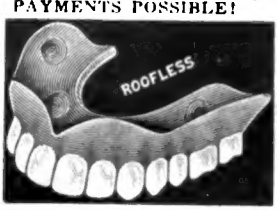

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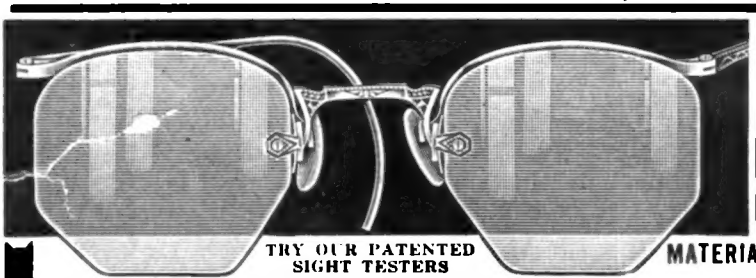

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OH BILL! I'M SO PROUD OF YOU. YOU'VE GONE AHEAD SO FAST IN RADIO
YES! I'VE GOT A GOOD JOB NOW AND A REAL FUTURE. THANKS TO N.R.I. TRAINING

TOM SAID "NO" HE'S STILL WAITING FOR "LUCK"
BILL'S A SAP TO WASTE HIS TIME STUDYING RADIO AT HOME
SAME OLD GRIND -- SAME SKINNY PAY ENVELOPE -- I'M JUST WHERE I WAS FIVE YEARS AGO
GUESS I'M A FAILURE. LOOKS LIKE I'LL NEVER GET ANYWHERE
YOU'LL ALWAYS BE A FAILURE, TOM, UNLESS YOU DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT. WISHING AND WAITING WON'T GET YOU ANYWHERE

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Now More Make $30 $40 $50 a Week Than Ever

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AUGUST ISSUE ON SALE JULY 10TH

Adventure

(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

Vol. 107, No. 3 for July, 1942 Best of New Stories

Tiger Wings (a novelette) . . . . . GEORGES SURDEZ 11
Hurtling his ancient Potez above the dense Cambodian jungle with a Nakajima 97 on his tail, young Norbert—flying blind for Chanod, Lord Tiger of Tonkin—demonstrates to Lieutenant Nukai of Nippon, the canine in the case, that it's not so much the size of the dogfight that matters as the amount of fight in the dog.

Stowaway . . . . . ALBERT RICHARD WETJEN 57
The rusty, vermin-infested *Maid of Arran* was a tramp qualified to break any mate's heart—except his own, Mr. Armstrong thought bitterly. That had been cracked and calloused years ago when the iron sea had stripped his manhood, broken him as it would break the fool kid he'd just found hidden behind the paint drums.

Hard Money . . . . . ROBERT ORMOND CASE 69
It took Bill Elder just a year to spend the seven dollars he'd borrowed from his partner, but any way you looked at it it was a sinful waste of good hard money.

Black Voyage . . . . . HARRY OLIVER 72
Death lay on the new land that year—black and swift in the east, red and sometimes all too slow in the west. It was a toss-up which was worse, Black Hawk or the cholera. But the men who sailed to Chicago in '32 had no choice. They had to fight the two.

5,000 Trojan Horses (conclusion) . . . . . LESLIE T. WHITE 80
Steve Patterson, R.C.M.P., learns what Baron von Wolfgang has up his parka sleeve and mushes north above the Soo in a mad race against time and a blizzard, to blast the Nazi ace's plan to bring the war home to Canada with a vengeance.

Frémont's Cinnamon Steeds (a fact story) . WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT 117
They were brothers, one a grass younger than the other, those *cañalos* of the Governor of California, and they used to gallop their owner a hundred and twenty-five miles a day back in the "splendid idle forties."

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Cover painted for Adventure by Ernest Chiriacka

Kenneth S. White, Editor

Published once a month by Popular Publications, Inc., 2256 Grove Street, Chicago, Illinois. Editorial and executive offices, 205 East Forty-second Street, New York City. Harry Steeger, President and Secretary. Harold S. Goldsmith, Vice President and Treasurer. Entered as Second Class Matter, October 2, 1935, at the Post Office at Chicago, Illinois, under the act of March 3, 1879. Yearly subscription $1.50 in advance. Single copy, 15 cents. Foreign postage, $1.00 additional. Subscription Dept., 205 East 42nd St., New York, N. Y. Trade Mark registered. Copyright, 1942, by Popular Publications, Inc. All rights reserved under Pan American Copyright Convention. Printed in U. S. A.

Accounting faces an unusual situation during this war period. The need and demand for accountants—both beginners and experts—is increasing while the supply is diminishing. That spells opportunity for many—perhaps for you.

The reason is simple.

Government needs more accountants. Many new activities are enlarging old bureaus and creating new ones—military, supplies, taxes, priorities, social security, price regulation, more indeed than we can name here.

Industry needs more accountants. New plants, enlarged plants, conversion to war production, more government regulations and reports, taxes, priorities, etc.—all call for more and better records.

This need will persist and increase all during the war—it will open many, many fine jobs, fine both in responsibility and pay. Nor will it end sharply with peace—it will continue through the difficult post-war adjustment period.

Yet many present accountants are going into the armed services. Their places and the calls for more accountants can only be filled by new men and women coming into accounting and coming quickly.

Can You Grasp This Opportunity?

That depends largely on you.

The opportunity is open most directly to women and to men not called to service (although we know of our accounting students given specialized duty and ranking in the army and navy).

If you are ambitious, willing to work hard in preparation and are at least average in mentality and education, this opportunity to serve a national need and profit personally is open to you. It will take real work but the rewards will be correspondingly good.

We Can Help You

Through our interesting, practical training—developed in 34 years of training accountants—you can learn accounting from the ground up or from any point where you now are in accounting. You need not lose an hour from your present work. The cost will be moderate and the payment terms easy. Free placement aid. And soon—surprisingly soon—you will be ready for the simpler positions and on your way up.

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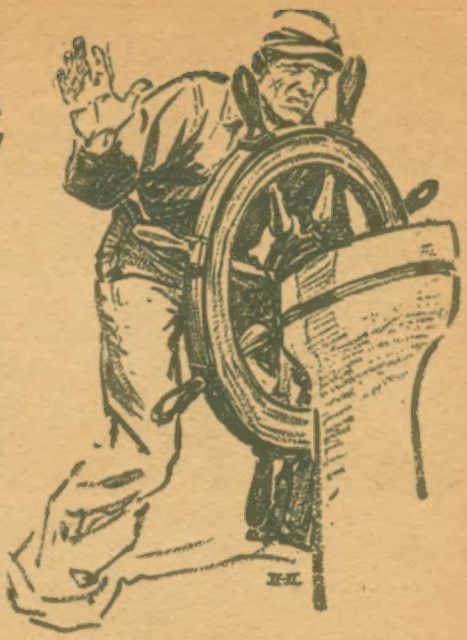

TRAINING for the ranks of the Merchant Marine.

Request:—I read in a paper that the government is training young men for Merchant Marine officers and is paying them fifty dollars a month. I understand this is not the cadet system but a national defense training course. Will you please give me some information on this subject if you have any. I believe this school is located at New London, Conn.

—Joseph Procek
804 Spruce Street
Wilmington, Del.

Reply by Gordon MacAllister:—It is true that the Government through its agency the Maritime Service is training men for future officer ranks in the Merchant Marine. This is definitely a cadet training system and not a "national defense training course." To be eligible, a cadet trainee must be a citizen of the U. S., between the ages of 18 and 25, a high school graduate, of good moral character, and of excellent physical condition, also unmarried. Examinations for a cadet appointment are competitive and are held in every state and city where civil service examinations are held and notice is posted about ten weeks before the semiannual examinations in January and July. Application to take examinations is made to the Supervisor of Cadet Training, U. S. Maritime Commission, Washington, D. C. The candidate must appear at the place of examination at his own expense. The pay for the first year of cadet training is $50 a month and all found. During the second year he receives $60 a month, and the same amount the third year. The fourth year the cadet earns $70 a month.

The school at New London, Connecticut is a "refresher" school for experienced seamen who wish to take certain courses to enable them to raise their ratings and eventually become officers. Men who are now officers may, at that school, prepare to take examinations for higher ratings.

If you cannot meet the academic requirements that go with cadet training, you might be able to enroll in the Maritime Service as an apprentice seaman. The enrollment of inexperienced applicants as apprentice seamen in the Maritime Service is limited to U. S. citizens between the ages of 18 and 25. Physical exams are exactly those of the U. S. Navy. Applicants must be of excellent character and must agree to serve one year in the Merchant Marine after completing the course of instruction. During the seven months period of training the enrollee is paid $21 a month and all found, including uniforms. The Maritime Service maintains schools for the training of apprentice seamen at St. Petersburg, Florida, Hoffman Island, New York Harbour, Gallups Island, Boston, Mass., and Hueneme, California. Training stations are operated in accordance with Coast Guard practice. Your local Coast Guard recruiting office will give you full information, or write directly to the U. S. Maritime Service, Washington, D. C.

OF cats and carp.

Request:—Two of us do a lot of Fishing in Rock River here near Rock Island. The river here is shallow and mostly rock bottom. We go at break of day and fish until 8 or 9 o'clock, and have to wade out to the few deeper holes. We have been using mostly dew worms for

(Continued on page 8)

How to Make YOUR Body Bring You FAME ...Instead of SHAME!

ARE YOU Skinny? Weak? Flabby?

Will You Let Me Prove I Can Make You a New Man?

I KNOW what it means to have the kind of body that people pity! Of course, you wouldn't know it to look at me now, but I was once a skinny weakling who weighed only 97 lbs.! I was ashamed to strip for sports or undress for a swim. I was such a poor specimen of physical development that I was constantly self-conscious and embarrassed. And I felt only HALF-ALIVE.

But later I discovered the secret that turned me into "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man." And now I'd like to prove to you that the same system can make a NEW MAN OF YOU!

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I can broaden your shoulders, strengthen your back, develop your whole muscular system INSIDE and OUTSIDE! I can add inches to your chest, give you a vise-like grip, make those legs of yours lithe and powerful. I can shoot new strength into your old backbone, exercise those inner organs, help you cram your body so full of pep, vigor and red-blooded vitality that you won't feel there's even "standing room" left for weakness and that lazy feeling! Before I get through with you I'll have your whole frame "measured" to a nice new, beautiful suit of muscle!

Only 15 Minutes A Day

No "ifs," "ands" or "maybes." Just tell me where you want handsome, powerful muscles. Are you fat and flabby? Or skinny and gawky? Are you short-winded, pepless? Do you hold back and let others walk off with the prettiest girls, best jobs, etc.? Then write for details about "Dynamic Tension" and learn how I can make you a healthy, confident, powerful HE-MAN.

"Dynamic Tension" is an entirely NATURAL method. Only 15 minutes of your spare time daily is enough to show amazing results—and it's actually fun. "Dynamic Tension" does the work.

"Dynamic Tension!" That's the ticket! The identical natural method that I myself developed to change my body from the scrawny, skinny-chested weakling I was at 17 to my present super-man physique! Thousands of other fellows are becoming marvelous physical specimens—my way. I give you no gadgets or contraptions to fool with. When you have learned to develop your strength through "Dynamic Tension," you can laugh at artificial muscle-makers. You simply utilize the DORMANT muscle-power in your own body—watch it increase and multiply into real, solid LIVE MUSCLE.

My method—"Dynamic Tension"—will turn the trick for you. No theory—every exercise is practical. And man, so easy! Spend only 15 minutes a day in your own home. From the very start you'll be using my method of "Dynamic Tension" almost unconsciously every minute of the day—walking, bending over, etc.—to BUILD MUSCLE and VITALITY.

Charles Atlas

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Name .....
(Please print or write plainly)

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City ..... State .....

(Continued from page 6)

catfish, channel and flat heads, or mud cats.

We use casting rods and light tackle and work for the big fellows. What size hook would you suggest?

Can you give us any advice as to baits, how big and how to use them, or time of day, kind of weather and such.

How about the upper or lower end of a hole or pool?

When the water goes down, we can wade out about 50 or 60 feet below one dam, which is about a good block long. Any suggestions as to how to work it?

I don't want to insult you, but how can we catch 10, 15 and 20 lb. carp. Hundreds of them, but we don't have much luck. 5 or 6 lb. seems to be our limit. They sure can fight, and would like to hook into a big one.

—Eugene Cressey,
1925 2d Ave.,
Rock Island, Illinois.

Reply by C. Blackburn Miller:—Catfish, and here I dislike casting aspersions on this species if it is a favorite of yours, is one of the most stupid of fish, I also have grave doubts concerning their ability to see and am of the opinion that they depend a great deal upon their feelers to locate bait, for certainly their scent leaves much to be desired from a viewpoint of excellence.

With these characteristics as a premise we will proceed to your problem. I do not know whether the Rock River is a clear water stream or not. If it is, you may have had the opportunity of watching catfish prowling all around a bait without even seeing or scenting it and when they finally bungle on to it, they inhale it without hesitation.

Night is, I have ever found, the best time to fish for catfish. They then seem to be on the prowl while during the day they are never so active. If you are, however, confining your efforts to the daylight hours I would recommend that you fish the deeper holes. Catfish come into the shallower water only during the night and retire to the deeper water when day breaks.

Fishing for catfish is largely a matter of supreme patience. Having selected a comfortable spot, just sit there. You may rest assured that sooner or later you will feel your line tauten and on the end of it will be one of these bewhiskered denizens of the river.

They will take nearly any bait that is offered provided that it is juicy and to their liking. Dew Worms (night-walkers), raw meat or a good chunk of fish is all one to a catfish and he will take it when he gets around to it, which may take some time but he'll eventually get there, you may rest assured. The best size hook is a 1-0 or 3-0 Sproat depending on the size of the fish. A catfish has a big mouth and he can engulf a surprisingly large hook but be sure that the point and barb is sharp.

Carp, notwithstanding the universal scorn in which the fish is held, are difficult to catch unless you do it exactly right. Even Izaak Walton was given to remark that "The Carp is a stately, good and very SUBTLE fish." The best bait is a paste made from dough, and a little honey, this well mixed with cotton or wool to hold it together. These pellets placed on a hook must not be too large but at the same time must cover the hook. The principal trick in carp fishing is to know the exact depth of water to an inch and the float on the line must be placed so that the bait just touches the bottom without permitting any slack.

It is a good thing to throw a few extra pellets in where you are fishing in order to attract them. It is a still better plan to bait the ground some hours before you go forth to angle, for fishing for carp is a test on any angler's patience.

The hook must not be too large and must be sharp to sink well into the fleshy lips. Once he is firmly hooked you can realize that he is your property and it is up to you to then decide what you are going to do with him.

I can volunteer an old recipe much in vogue in England.

"Take a carp, alive if possible, scour and rub him clean with water and salt but do not remove the scales. Put the carp into a pot or kettle with his blood and liver. Take a handful of sweet-majoram, thyme and parsley and a sprig of rosemary, bind them in bundles and put them in with the carp with five whole onions, and a dozen pickled oysters and three anchovies. Then pour on enough claret wine to cover him and add salt, cloves and the rinds of oranges and lemons. Cover pot and boil until done over a quick fire.

Remove the carp and place it on a dish and pour over the broth together with the yolks of three eggs beaten up. Garnish dish with lemons and serve." Or just throw the carp away.

LOOK AT YOURSELF — TOMORROW!

WE'RE talking to men who are troubled about jobs at the moment.

True, it's no fault of yours that the war has — *temporarily* — taken you out of working clothes. (Many thousands of willing, intelligent Americans are waiting to go to work in industries that are changing over to all-out war production.)

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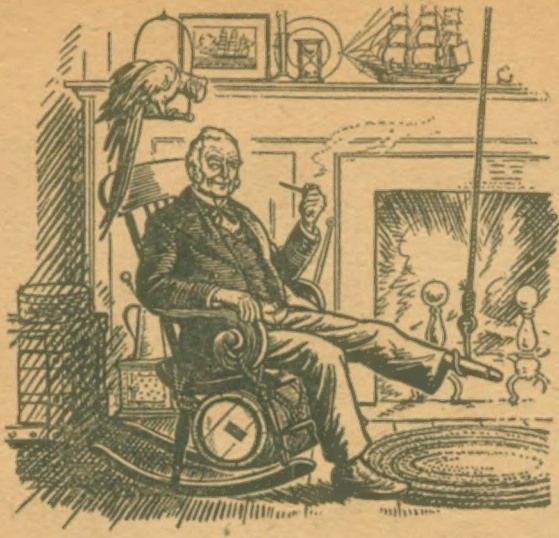

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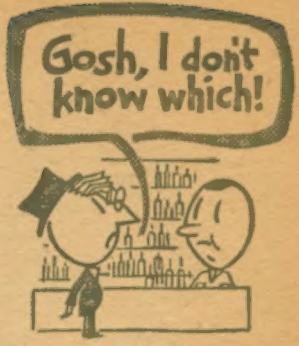


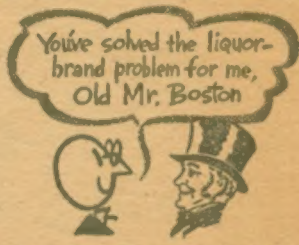
How I Solved My Liquor Dither
by Don Herold

I used to quiver with confusion every time I started out to buy some sort of indoor drinking ammunition. I was baffled by brands — hundreds of them. I'm not a liquor expert, are you? I mean, drinking is a pleasure with me—not a life work.

Then an old-timer, a friend of mine who has been around a lot of liquors, said "Settle on Old Mr. Boston."

Yes, sir! "Old Mr. Boston" is a handy handle by which we buyers can grasp this whole liquor-brand proposition.

Just imagine! More than 30 different liquors under ONE name—all good—all pleasant to the palate and purse. There are whiskeys, gins, brandies, and a bunch of tasty cordials and liqueurs. All *Old Mr. Boston.* All reasonable in price.



Every drink in the Old Mr. Boston line smacks of that skilled New England craftsmanship which for three centuries has been the tradition of the great old city of Boston.

Why play hide and seek with liquor brands? Join me today, and settle on good Old Mr. Boston.

ILLUSTRATED BY
HAMILTON GREENE

TIGER WINGS

A Chanod Novelette

By

GEORGES SURDEZ

THE thunderous throbbing of the nine cylinders hurtling the Potez under the stars pulsed in a monotonous, lulling rhythm. Norbert sat at the controls, motionless save for the flicker of his eyes to the instruments and the instinctive reflexes that checked the plane when it left the path of the Mekong River, flowing through the darkness several thousand feet below, and struck the rougher air over the jungle.

He glanced at the altimeter: twelve hundred meters. That was safe in this region. He caught himself humming in time to the motor, and smiled. This was his first flight in many months, and he now understood how much he had missed flying. For years, it had been part of his life. Under the wings of his planes had unrolled the immensity of the Sahara, the Syrian Desert, the crests of the Atlas, of Lebanon, the stark, rugged borderland of Cilicia, the Vosges, the Jura and the Alps, and this dense

Cambodian jungle over which he was again soaring.

Until France had collapsed, he had been an officer in the air force. Humiliation, defeat and frustration had grooved his face, grayed his hair. But he felt strong and alive now, he was a man of twenty-six once more. Hope had surged, he felt that he would live to see the world emerge from chaos.

On the seat next to him was Flachier, a little, dry man of fifty-odd, eyes closed, thin, yellowish face calm. But he was awake, and from time to time his lean fingers reached upward to adjust the radio. The minutes slid by and with each one, three kilometers slid beneath them, added to the hundreds they had covered, cut from the hundred remaining.

"We'll get there, don't worry," he called to Flachier.

"I never worry, young man."

Flachier scribbled on a pad on his lap, handed the paper over. *Our passage must have been reported. But there seems to be no excitement below. Usual chattering in Japanese, in code. Broadcast in English, bad news. They are attacking everywhere. Hong Kong, Singapore, Philippines. They have made a strong start, as was to be expected.*

Norbert banked, looked about. Far below, stringy clouds shone feebly in the light of the stars, there were silvery streaks like spangles in the patchwork of shadows. No plane in sight.

He turned his head. The door into the cabin had been secured open, and he saw his other passengers. They appeared to be asleep. Madelaine, his wife, was huddled in her seat. The other woman, Madame Hoffner, leaned back, her beautiful face very pale in the dim light, more than ever like a delicate ivory carving.

Altitude twelve hundred meters, everything in order. And Norbert guided the old machine down the length of the Indo-Chinese Peninsula. He had left the mountain fortress of Tien-Mafu some minutes before ten o'clock on the preceding evening. It was now after one, and they were due over his destination, a clearing in the Cambodian jungle, within an hour. They would hide during the day, take off again for Singapore. That lap might prove more dangerous, as both shores were occupied by soldiers, consequently equipped with anti-aircraft cannon.

There were a few French pilots at Singapore. He would join them. Somehow, some way, Madelaine would be evacuated. But where? Communications with France were cut off. America? Japanese vessels and submarines ranged the Pacific. Well, that bridge would be crossed in due time. He must be like Flachier and stop worrying.

But that man's capacity for worry must be blunted. His career had been fantastic. At nineteen, the youngest man in his class, he had become a sub-lieutenant of cavalry. At twenty-five, he had been famous for his explorations in the Chad and Wadai regions. At thirty-two, he had emerged from the first World War a major and a national hero. At thirty-six, he had been a director in a great finance syndicate, and a millionaire. At forty, the company having crashed, he had been the nominal culprit, a fugitive from justice, a bankrupt. After that, he had been an engineer in the ammunition works at Mukden, an official on a Chinese railway, a labor contractor on the coast. And for the past six years, he had been chief-of-staff for General Chanod, once a Legion captain, who led a free-lance army in the hills of southern China.

"You'll see Flachier at work," Chanod had told Norbert. "It will complete your education."

THAT had been in the watch-room at Tien-Mafu, in the great gallery lighted by windows pierced through the solid rock. As his chief spoke, Norbert had stared out of those windows, upon the tawny hills rolling toward what had been a French colony. Through the big range-finder, he could have discerned the white patch made on a peak by a blockhouse on the other side of the frontier, a blockhouse constructed by the Foreign Legion. And above it, instead of the tricolor, he would have seen a small flag bearing the emblem of the rising sun. Those red disks were multiplying every-

where, spreading like a rash over the Far East.

Chanod, following his glance, brushed a large, square hand over his closely cropped yellow hair. "Japan has been preparing for this in particular for twenty-five years, in general for almost eighty. Nothing amazing in that she does well at the start." A grin lifted his tawny mustache, corded the muscles of his jaws. "The question is how long her enemies will take to discover what we know up here, that a Japanese attacked is worth about one tenth of a Japanese attacking.

"What is of interest to us, however, is that we are very near her main bases. We are too few to be dangerous. And if we get too annoying before Japan is heavily engaged southward, an expedition will be sent against us. Our position is strong, but no position is impregnable to an enemy who has the lives to spend and the will to spend them. This place would cost them ten to fifteen thousand casualties. With a major war going on, they would not worry over that, for what we could kill would not be noticed.

"Our real interest, from a business viewpoint, would be to serve the Japs. They wanted to hire me once, to raid the Burma Road at scattered points. They know my bands, in that sort of operations, could do the work of an army corps. But they know now that I could not side with them if I wished. Aside from a nucleus of German ex-Legionnaires, our men hate the Japanese.

"Did you see these?"

He handed Norbert a handbill, a sheet of flimsy paper covered with greasy printing. The same message was given in several languages, French, English, German, Chinese and Japanese. Members of Chanod's forces, described in both French and German as *francstireurs*, in English as guerrilla-bandits, were informed that the Japanese would accept surrender, guarantee safety for women and children, mild internment for the men, with the chance of serving Japan on some front. Five exceptions were listed: Chanod, Flachier, Harris, Hoffner and Norbert. All, the paper declared, had been convicted of murder and acts of violence against the Japanese Realm, and sentenced to death. Norbert noticed that in his case the judgment had been approved by a French court-martial at Hanoi.

"I'm honored of course," Norbert smiled. "But why?"

"They accuse you, wrongly as we know, of supplying me with the information for the storming and sacking of the town of Phac-Lew, in Tonkinese Territory."

"How did those things get up here, General?"

"I don't know. We have collected several hundred in barracks. Copies were found posted up on the bulletin-board. Colonel Katana, their mystery agent in Indo-China since 1923, has promised my head, and a few other heads, to his government, to avenge the Japanese we have killed. Who brought that bundle of posters up here? Only two minor raids have been carried out lately. One was led by Major Hoffner, one by Captain Soun. Hoffner is on the list. Soun is a Chinese who detests the Japanese. Theoretically, both are above suspicion."

"Theoretically?"

"Yes." Chanod lighted a cigar. "I've grown skeptical of people. Most men are provided with hidden springs which, when pressed, release the treason in them. Money, greed for power, lust for women, vanity, revenge, complications of all of those. Even patriotism is not a guarantee, as the question looms up: On which side do I serve my country's interests best? Some of those Vichy swine probably think themselves patriotic Frenchmen." Chanod shrugged, broke off, laid the tip of a pencil on a point of the map. "You've checked the machine. Flying is your business. You are sure that you can find the spot?"

"Yes. That machine is in good condition, General. Probably a limousine-type once used for commercial travel? Thought so. It's old as planes go—seven or eight years old. But I was trained for bombing on Potez machines of much the same type."

"What chance is there of the Japanese intercepting you?"

"Small chance, General. The machines they have in the scattered fields

down the Mekong Valley are probably as old as this one, no faster. I have seen their scouting planes in the past two weeks. Flying high, they'll have only a faint idea of my direction. A plane moves in three dimensions, remember. By the time they roll out machines to pursue me, take off, I'll be lost."

"You're sure you can make a good landing in that clearing?"

"One is never sure, General. But I should do it, if the people down there follow instructions and mark the field as I indicated. I have the height of the trees." He spread out a diagram. "Lights here and here, a single light there. I pass between the first two and head exactly for the other. It's a question of nerve and confidence in others. I know how well you are obeyed. I'll have the necessary confidence."

"A Japanese machine might spot the lights—"

"Yes. But if they hear more than one plane, they can shoot up a red rocket instead of a white flare. I'll circle wide. And try them on the radio. In any case, even if a plane did spot those lights at night, it would be almost impossible for it to locate the spot again by day, if well camouflaged. Thirty thousand square meters make a very small spot in thousands of square kilometers of bush. The forest around there is cut by numerous clearings, rice-fields of native villages and small rubber plantations."

"And you can take an additional passenger to Singapore?"

"That machine was made to carry a crew of two, and from four to six passengers, and mail. With your unknown passenger, we shall be five."

"And you think that a machine gun would be useless, Norbert?"

"Surely, General. Their combat machines around here carry four, served by trained gunners. I shall be occupied handling the machine. Colonel Flachier may be an excellent shot, but handling a machine gun from a moving plane is special work. Moreover, seeing a machine gun, the Japanese would take no chance and shoot us down at once. We shall have two women aboard."

"True. Norbert, you have friends in Singapore. Do you think you can find shelter for Madame Hoffner?"

NORBERT smiled in embarrassment.

"She has money. I rather believe she'll prefer to take care of herself without supervision."

"Suppose I want to keep her under supervision?"

"I could not ask my friends to do that. And—" Norbert reddened somewhat. "Madame Hoffner is a charming woman. But if you have listened to her reminiscences, you'll remember that she knows Singapore, hence is known there."

"A point I wished to bring out. If you get to Singapore without having definite news from me, you will go to this number, on Scott Road, ask for Mr. William and simply announce your arrival and the hotel at which Madame Hoffner is stopping."

"I'll note it," Norbert said.

"No. Memorize it. One never knows."

"Right."

"There is no need to thank me for the chance to leave, Norbert. You are useful to me. You see, the situation has grown so complicated that I can no longer play a lone hand. Flachier speaks excellent English, he is a trained soldier, and he knows exactly what we can offer. The man you will pick up will be of great use to the British, if they can persuade him to work with them. I hope to obtain a sort of semi-official connection with the United Nations, as counter-guerrilla on the Burma Road.

"I do not wish to approach the Chinese directly. I have too many old enemies among them, from my beginning. Also, between ourselves, the Chinese are not as unified as appears on the surface. They have two or three big names, gentlemen who were educated abroad or at Hong Kong, who speak and write English, who are vocal. The real work is done by obscure leaders, Chinese soldiers, inarticulate in a foreign tongue. That leads to controversies. Such as occurred in 1932, when Chiang Kai-shek refused to send arms and ammunitions to Tsai-Ting-Kai, whose Nineteenth Route Army was holding the Japs well. I want a direct contact with the British

and the Americans for two reasons, they're likely to prove more generous, and I am less likely to be ordered to do things to help some bird's reputation more than the cause as a whole.

"I am rather testy when interfered with in military operations. And I don't want a calming potion slipped into my tea some morning that would calm me permanently. Also, the Chinese are avaricious with their supplies and ammunition, perhaps for the good reason they find them hard to obtain. My force is so compact, so small, that it could be rearmed with standardized equipment inside a couple of months. Colonel Flachier will take up such questions. The British are experts in organizing such things—they've backed guerrillas and commandos for centuries." Chanod smiled widely. "Moreover, they are not miserly after a war. Compare what Foch received from France with what Great Britain granted Haig. They throw a hundred thousand pounds out casually, after winning. And I may be of some use keeping things astir here when the Japanese have reached their initial objectives and are preparing the next move. The pebble in the boot, you know. If I were a British subject, I could almost guarantee to emerge from the mess as Sir Charles."

"Frenchmen have been knighted, General."

"Then bet on me to be." Chanod laughed and slapped his palm hard on the table. "I was brought up in the post-Fashoda atmosphere. If anyone had told my father that I'd grow up to offer my sword to Albion, he would have shot me. On the other hand, he admired his classmate Pétain immensely, and I doubt if that admiration would have survived Vichy." The Lord Tiger touched Norbert lightly on the shoulder. "Never survive yourself, young man."

"I shall find gasoline?"

"Ah, yes, let us keep to the point. Yes, they will have gasoline and oil for your plane. And probably much information about the Japanese air patrols farther west." Chanod seemed to reflect a moment, then added: "How

These Thin Gillettes are on the beam—
Give shaves that make a gal's eyes gleam!
They save you trouble, time and cash
And glide through tough beard in a flash.
Top Quality at Rock-Bottom Price
Produced By The Maker Of The Famous Gillette Blue Blade
4 for 10c
Save Extra Money! Get The Big New Economy Package, 12 For 27c

much do you know of Colonel Flachier?"

"What I have been told here. And vague details concerning his financial crash in France, heard at my father's table when I was a small lad."

"You understand that he represents me, that any order, no matter how strange, must be obeyed?"

"Naturally, General."

"He is a strange fellow. He never forgets opposition. Do not argue with him."

"I've learned to obey, General," said Norbert.

"He has his own methods. Remember that."

NORBERT had wondered mildly as to his chief's reason for giving him this advice. Flachier had arrived on the field, used for football by the soldiers at Tien-Mafu, five minutes before departure. He stood aside, a small, odd silhouette in a light yellow overcoat and a large, ridiculous tourist's cap. A number of women had come to bid farewell to Madelaine and Nadia Hoffner, who clung to the major's arm. The sturdy, soldierly man seemed very moved, and the girl wept. As tears are contagious, the others cried also. In the white glare of the searchlight, Norbert, taking leave of Chanod, caught sight of his passenger's face, grinning, sardonic.

Trusted men placed the few pieces of baggage in the plane. There were kisses, hand-shakes, final recommendations: "Nadia, Nadia, have a drink for me at the Raffles' bar—Madelaine, don't forget to give Monsieur Flachier my patterns—and don't forget my thermos bottle—"

"Women wailing," Flachier grumbled as he climbed in. "The nastiest noise on earth."

The door was slammed shut. Norbert peered out, waved his hand warningly. Then he engaged the starter, the motor turned over, picked up and throbbed. As he waited for it to warm up, he caught a glimpse of the women scurrying back from the wash of the propeller, holding scarves over their hair. The machine started to roll, bumped along a moment, then he was banking at the end of the field, circling, rising to clear the sharp points of rocks. The slope fell away beneath him into darkness, he headed south.

Flachier put on the earphones. Then he produced a long metal case from a pocket of the yellow coat, opened it, shook three pills into his palm from a tiny phial.

"Not offering you any," he called out. "Morphine."

CHAPTER II

THE MARK OF THE COBRA

THE Potez rolled to a stop. Norbert was immensely relieved. As he told Chanod, he had full confidence that the orders issued by radio would be carried out. But from the moment when the signal flare had spurted and bloomed above the jungle, reporting all clear and all prepared, he had been under a hard strain. Under ideal conditions a plane is likely to find some trouble landing on a confined space at great speed, and this was an unknown field, a pocket of darkness in the dark.

As his motor died out, while the vibrations were still in his ears, in his body, the guiding light ahead blinked out. Flachier reached up and switched off the plane's light.

"Don't move," he advised.

There were whisperings in the cabin behind, then Madelaine's voice called out: "Have we arrived, Hugues?"

"No, darling," Norbert said, irked by Flachier's chuckling. "We've just stopped for gas."

"Why don't we get out?"

"Snakes," Flachier snapped. He leaned closer to Norbert and added: "That ordinarily satisfies them."

"Who are you?" a man's voice asked out of the night.

"The people you expect, Debreuil."

"Hello, Flachier. Who's with you—Raoul?"

"Raoul's left us. New pilot and two ladies."

"Ladies. How charming."

They alighted, Norbert passed ciga-

rettes to the others in the party.

"Any sign of them around?" Flachier asked.

"A couple of planes, an hour ago."

"I mean, around here on the ground."

"Well, I have two civilian inspectors at my plantation, and a small detachment of soldiers, under a sergeant. But they don't move about much at night. Two of them died of snake bite."

And both men laughed softly. Norbert could see little of the newcomer, a tall, vague shape in the dark. He spoke in the Cambodian tongue. Several voices answered from nearby.

"They'll camouflage your plane. Come along, it's only a short walk." There was the flash of a pocket torch on the grass, and the planter replied to a nervous question from Madelaine: "No danger, Madame, they bite only on order."

They walked for fifteen minutes, the stranger in the lead, talking in low tones with Flachier, Madelaine on their heels. Madame Hoffner clutched Norbert's arm firmly, perhaps too firmly. "I'm so afraid, so afraid—"

"Oh, yes, you are," he thought, "you poor sheltered thing—" while he replied aloud, "Nothing to be afraid of, Madame Hoffner."

"Up this way, watch your step."

They climbed a flight of stairs, almost a ladder, crossed a narrow veranda, entered a house. Debreuil lighted a small lamp. They were in a rather large room, neatly furnished in wicker.

"Welcome. Sit down."

Flachier introduced them. Debreuil was a type very familiar to Norbert, a colonial Frenchman, lean, tanned, rugged. A graying beard fringed his chin, his eyes were blue, piercing, resolute. He was forty-eight or fifty.

"We can talk here?" Flachier asked.

"Yes. I've got eight of my trackers outside. They'll warn me if any stranger comes. Hungry, thirsty?" He indicated the table, loaded with bottles and food.

"He is still here?" Flachier asked after a while.

"Yes. Where else would he go? The French police or the Japs would pick him up very soon if he showed himself in the city." Debreuil urged his guests to eat more, then resumed. "The Japs here believe he is what he seems, a bookkeeper. Why? Does the boss want him?"

Norbert was to learn that to Debreuil and many men on the outside, Chanod was not a general, or a captain, but was referred to in tones of affectionate respect as the boss, *le patron*.

"I'll explain later. Have you reported our arrival?"

"Not yet. We send out at three forty-five."

"Your Japs know about this place?"

"Naturally. I've shown them the clearing, they know I intended to use it as a nursery for new trees. They know I've stopped work on it and why. They've requisitioned most of the laborers for their own service. Transports and trail cutting. They've filed by into Siam some kilometers north of here for two months, a lot of infantry and some mechanized units. Concentrating for the attack on Malaya."

"How do they treat you?"

"Very politely, on the surface. They're harsh on natives, and shoot and bayonet easily. They don't spare Frenchmen, either. An employee on Gervais' plantation got into an argument with one of their inspectors, technical question. A sentry stabbed him, and he died before the doctor could come. The fool was not even punished. Regrettable misunderstanding, they said." Debreuil grinned nervously. "And nothing one can do about it."

"It'll be settled in one lump some fine day," Flachier assured him.

"Let's hope so. I think they rather like me. I was a commercial employee in Kobe for some years, way back in the Twenties. They're sure they've got the war won, that they'll have Hong Kong, Manila, Singapore before two months."

"The boss thinks they will."

"Then what?"

"They'll swarm on for a time. Then there will be the usual sag, as in 1905, and the tide will turn, because no one will intervene to make peace, as they are not fighting the Imperial Russian regime. They fight in flashes, doggedness beats them. And the principles of war still hold true. They're sprawled out and will be vulnerable when the Allies organize a counter-offensive. If the

United Nations get an intelligent, aggressive leader, Chanod says, the roles can be reversed in six months."

Flachier cleared the cloth before him, sketched on a piece of paper. "This is presumably an octopus. We label the tentacles: Pacific Islands, Philippines, Dutch Indies, Singapore, Burma, China, Manchuria. The head-body is Japan itself. The tentacles are tough, hard to slash through. But the core is sensitive. You jab here, and even if the blow is not dangerous, the tentacles start coiling back of themselves. The target should be Japan itself. In six months, America should have overwhelming air superiority in the East and mass raids will be possible."

"Allah hear you!" Debreuil said. "How long will you remain?"

"Until tomorrow night," Madelaine said.

"Until we get orders," Flachier corrected.

"But we're going to Singapore," she insisted.

"Unless otherwise instructed." Flachier turned to their host. "When can I have an interview with him?"

"Tomorrow morning. It takes about an hour and thirty minutes to drive from the plantation here. I can telephone." He indicated the apparatus on a small table. "But the Japanese listen in. It will be natural, however, to ask him over to attend to some details over hiring and firing."

Flachier nodded, then turned to Madame Hoffner and spoke with great courtesy. "Madame, we are in constant danger of discovery. If you were caught with a gun, your sex would be little protection. You would be executed or incarcerated for several years."

Madame Hoffner looked at the little man, Madelaine looked at her. And Norbert looked at the three. Both women were blondes, both were blue-eyed. But where his wife's face was heart-shaped and rounded, Nadia's was aquiline and haughty in expression. Madelaine's hair was golden blond, Nadia's very light, almost white in the lamplight. But he had to admit that the other woman, whom he knew to be thirty-odd, did not look five years older than the young girl.

He knew that there was something that escaped him, something which the other three, even Madelaine, knew and he did not. The suggestion was not casual, had import. His wife was startled, Nadia was angry and also frightened, Flachier was mild and amused.

"But I have no gun," Nadia said, shrugging. She drew back her cape, pushed her pocketbook forward with a pretty gesture of her slim hand: "I'll submit to search." She laughed.

Flachier's thin face returned the smile.

"You permit me to confiscate the gun if I find it?"

"I beg you to do so."

"Thank you." Flachier reached for Madelaine's pocketbook. "With your permission, Madame—" He opened it and took out a little bundle wrapped in a man's handkerchief. He opened it, revealed a very small automatic, ornamented with golden scrolls on the barrel, the handle covered with mother-of-pearl plaques. "Belgian Browning, respectable caliber, thirty-two. What the Paris armorers call a farewell letter. Especially designed for ladies."

"I didn't tell him," Madelaine wailed, when she met Nadia's withering look. "I never told him."

"Madame Norbert is right," Flachier said. "When she placed her pocketbook on that table, I heard the sound of something very heavy. Very heavy, that is, for a lady's reticule. I knew it was yours, because the sound not only intrigued you, but annoyed you."

"I don't know why you imagined that."

"But it's yours, isn't it?"

"Yes, I admit it." Nadia smiled, perfectly at ease. "However, Monsieur Flachier, why shouldn't I have it? You gave those ridiculous instructions about guns, you went so far as to examine my baggage—"

"With you and your husband present," Flachier said. "You are well aware that no one escapes that formality when leaving and entering Tien-Mafu, save an officer returning from a raid. There are sometimes little trinkets that a man

may like to keep privately. In your case, you were already privileged to leave, because of a private agreement between you and Major Hoffner. I could not dispense with the usual visit. Maps and photographs of Tien-Mafu are not permitted to be taken away without inspection."

"I turned my albums over to you myself."

"And they contained nothing objectionable from our point of view." Flachier shrugged. "You are angry with me, Madame, when you are the only one who should not be. I have the right to be angry, as you tried to deceive me. Madame Norbert has the right to be angry, as she could not understand the gravity of what she agreed to do, among us. Monsieur Norbert surely does not like to think that if we had been intercepted and forced down by the Japanese, his wife would have been in serious trouble."

"If we had been forced down, Monsieur, I should have taken the gun back in time."

"On your honor, I suppose?"

"My honor as a woman matches yours as a man, Monsieur."

Flachier looked at her, smiled. "The comparison is difficult to make. A little wine, perhaps?"

"Yes, thank you." Nadia lighted a cigarette, then looked at Norbert. "I'm sorry. But I have carried that pistol for twelve years, hated to leave it behind. Monsieur Flachier would never have allowed me to take it. He doesn't like women."

"I don't like women with pistols," the older man replied. "A hangover, perhaps, from more tumultuous years." He took out the magazine, slid the cartridge from the chamber. "I shall return your fetish when we part."

IT SEEMED to Norbert that Nadia grew somewhat paler. There was something behind the scene, something which both Flachier and the woman knew, a game, a dangerous game.

"I'll go with you, Debreuil, and talk to the boss."

"All right. Madame Hoffner, you will find a comforable couch in there—" He indicated a door, a flimsy door made of bamboo. "The other is for you, Norbert."

He left, followed by Flachier. Nadia tried to make conversation, saw that Norbert was still tense, and left to rest.

"Why didn't you tell me about the gun?" he whispered angrily as soon as he and Madelaine were alone.

"She asked me not to."

"I gave my word that you did not have a gun."

"Well, you didn't know, so they can't blame you."

"I told you not to be too friendly with her."

"Who else could I talk to up there? Those dumb Frenchwomen, the half-castes, the natives? Madame Hoffner is a well educated person and—"

"Do you know where Hoffner met her?"

"You've told me often enough. In a raid. Where would your friend Hoffner meet a woman? And her husband was killed that night."

"A German agent she'd met in Shanghai."

"Well, you have to meet people somewhere, and that was before the war." Norbert considered her with growing irritation, but wished he had not started the argument. Madelaine was very young, very pretty, but under that perfect, smooth brow, lurked a most dangerous brain. She had few peers at balancing a pyramid of pure logic on a false premise. "Who went about yelling he had to do something? Who joined Chanod's band? I didn't. I'm your wife, I followed you. What did you expect to find up there, living with adventurers and soldiers?"

"Still, you might have picked out—"

"Tell me, tell me whom I could have picked?"

"Madame Mallion, for instance."

"Because she fled with her husband after he was accused of grafting by the Customs Service? Stimulating conversation, with her brats smearing jam on your stockings." Madelaine panted with indignation. "Dressed like a potato sack, didn't play tennis and thought Louis XV was the inventor of a chair."

"Don't shout," he whispered, indicating the flimsy door. "You'll drop her in Singapore. Meanwhile, I'll—"

"I won't drop her. I'm not an ingrate. I'd have gone crazy up there if I hadn't had someone to talk to about other things than recipes for *cassoulet*. She was the only decent tennis player, too."

"She showed plainly that she takes you for a sucker, a brainless little goose."

"She thinks that because I married you."

"When you two are through with your low mass," said Flachier's voice from the doorway, "let me know." He seemed very pleased with himself, a cigarette moved in the corner of his thin mouth. "We've caught a fish—"

Debreuil came in, followed by three natives, two carrying the third. The first pair were half-naked Cambodians, trackers. The other, who was tied hand and foot with lengths of cloth, probably his turban, wore white shorts and a singlet. He appeared to be a Chinese from the Kwang-Si.

"Japanese," Flachier said. "Probably with some other blood. *Dochira kara irasshaimashita?*" The captive did not blink. He had fastened his glance on the far wall. "If our friend Debreuil wasn't smart, he'd have located our radio. Know him, Debreuil?"

"Yes. He's employed in the smokehouse on the plantation. Came with a gang of Chinese laborers, three years ago."

Debreuil spoke to the Cambodians, asked them to wait on the veranda. "One of my trackers tipped me off that someone was roaming around the moment I went down. I told him to get a friend and nab the fellow if he tried to follow us. I'm sure he knows the plane landed here."

"I can try him in Chinese," Norbert suggested.

"He speaks fair French, understands it well. Don't you?"

The other did not reply, did not blink.

"What could he tell us, anyway?" Flachier wondered. "If he spies on us, he's working for the Japs. And he knows nothing of any use to us. The best thing is to get it over with as rapidly as possible. Have you got your kit, Debreuil?"

"Yes. But I'd just as soon"—he indicated Madelaine with a lift of his chin—"have it done elsewhere, by someone else."

"Bah. Nothing frightening about it. Still, as they make unpleasant noises at times—" Flachier rolled a strip of cloth around a stick six inches or so in length, which he inserted in the man's mouth like a bit, and fastened with a string. "Eh, don't be frightened, *mon vieux*," he added as the man started to struggle a bit. "It won't take long."

FROM the long metal case Norbert had seen before, he took an odd instrument, a little slab of ebony on which rested a fine metal framework, a spring. The thing resembled a mousetrap. Save that at the moving end, which snaps on the mouse's neck in the real instrument, were mounted two steel points, about two inches apart. Then he broke the neck of an ampoule, drew the contents into a sort of fountain-pen filler. While this had no meaning to Norbert and Madelaine, the man must have understood, for he tried to talk. Perspiration started to ooze down his face.

"Oh-oh," Flachier chuckled. "He's put two and two together."

"He says he'll talk," Debreuil declared, after leaning close to listen.

"I'm afraid he wouldn't be interesting enough. No, no, my friend." He glanced at the native and smiled gently. "You cannot combat destiny. One thinks that one will do one's dirty work and live forever. And, suddenly, poof, it's over." As he spoke, Flachier was smearing the little hooks with the dropper. "I can almost assure you that the contortions and leaps are painless."

"Are you going to kill him?" Norbert asked.

"Eh? What do you want me to do with him?"

"Madelaine, go to our room. Now, Monsieur Flachier—"

"Colonel to you, Lieutenant Norbert."

Norbert stopped short. He recalled Chanod's advice not to interfere with Flachier, that "he had his own methods." This was one of the methods.

Flachier squatted near the man, smiled. "We'll concede him a large snake," he said.

Debreuil had called back the two native hunters, to hold the captive, who was struggling, moaning. Flachier had squatted near the man, was measuring a distance on his calf with his outstretched thumb and fingers, holding the mousetrap poised in his right hand.

"How about this far from the ground?" He looked up at Norbert and Debreuil, smiled. "We'll concede him a large snake." He laid the ebony board against the flesh, released the spring. He straightened up, crossed to the table and started to clean the metal fangs. "Take him out on the veranda until it's over. Norbert—"

"Yes, Colonel."

"I'm glad you did not make a scene." He continued cleaning his minute tools, laying them back in the case, neat, carefully as a surgeon. "I invented this method some years ago. Granted that I am a sadist, a low dog and all that. But take this case as an example. This man, an ordinary coolie, a spy, was jeopardizing a dozen lives directly, yours, mine, Debreuil, his trackers, and who knows what more—our plane, our entire mission.

"We could shoot him, stab him, strangle him, stifle him. And bury the body where no one could find it. *But* his ab-

sence would be noticed. By accident, the body might be found. The Japanese would know their agent was murdered. They'd look for culprits. As it is, this chap will be freed of his bandages, which are cloth and leave no marks, if removed in time, and placed somewhere to be found by the first searching party. The autopsy will show that he died of snake venom. The marks of the fangs will be there. The patient doesn't suffer much, in my opinion. And forty to fifty thousand innocent people die of snake bite in the East every year."

"That's true," Norbert granted.

"And no suspicion is aroused."

"That's not quite correct," Debreuil said. "We've had a close shave. The Japanese are not damn fools, you know, and the fact that their spies die in the bush, one after another, has made them suspicious. About a month ago, one of our men, a born Cambodian, took to prowling about after me. They had bought him, of course. I tried to duck him, but he forced my hand. One morning, when I was going to the radio to send an emergency message, he was on my trail. I tipped off my trackers to catch him, went to him, gave him his injection. Then I rushed off to dispatch the message.

"That afternoon, the Japs had two of their own doctors from Pnom-Penh, an inspector of their secret police, and half a company of troops at my plantation. They called me and four of my employees, Frenchmen, into the autopsy-room. A little surgeon, who'd studied in Paris and spoke French very well, takes me before the body, and points to the fang-marks. They were on the side of the thigh, and upside down! He reminds me that there have been several other cases of snake bite, about three times what the statistics show for our zone.

"He takes a bandage and illustrates. The snake must have lain hanging down from the man's shoulder to bite him there. Well, the sweat breaks out all over me, and I hope he doesn't see it. I realize that I was in a hurry, that the guy was kicking a lot and that I made a bad slip. And, right in my pants pocket, I have that tool in a spectacle case. Oh, sure, with the hooks separate and wrapped up. But still, a guy doesn't walk around with a queer mousetrap. The doctor shows his teeth, the inspector shows his, all the Japs around show theirs.

"I ask them, why ask me? They say I am the boss and responsible. I ask them why I should go around holding snakes upside down to bite my laborers. Well, they don't know how much I know, and don't want to tell me it's their agents that get bit. So they get sore and say I must explain, not ask questions. They're smart, they feel I'm putting something over. So I must tell them, please, how a man can get bitten in that place, upside down."

DEBREUIL ceased talking a moment. There was some movement, some sound on the veranda. Both Flachier and the planter seemed to know what it was.

"How did you get out of it?" Norbert asked.

"Inspiration. I went through the damndest pantomime you've ever seen. I coiled that bandage on the floor, squatted low, reached between my legs, brought the front end forward, pressed it on the flesh of my right inside thigh. I explain to him that it was dark, that he didn't see the snake behind him, that the snake got frightened, struck, missed the buttock and got the thigh. They all covered their teeth for a moment.

"Then the inspector sent a squad out to look at the spot where the body had been found, to see if there was any indication to check up on my theory. They're thorough. I said that not finding anything wouldn't mean I was wrong, that the snake probably had struck at the first alarm! They tell me perhaps I'm right, but they must know for more questioning. So I stay there, in the autopsy-room, staring at the stiff, and wondering how long before they arrest me and search me—they have to be careful, because I have a good record—and they need our rubber. If a planter's insulted, the others may lay down completely, instead of just having delaying accidents.

"The squad comes back, and the guy

in charge is holding up a snake, in both hands, at least seven feet long! Found it hanging right at the spot, and killed it. Talk about luck! My nerves sort of broke then, I started to laugh and couldn't stop. That made them suspicious, and that doctor starts to try to match the fangs with the perforations on that corpse! Lucky for me that cop was a good shot, and the bullet had messed up the head."

He left to assist and direct his men in disposing of the spy's body. Norbert was shaken by his story, divided between disgust and admiration. Debreuil was risking his life every second, dared a harsher death than a man in the trenches of Malaya. For all Norbert knew, his work was most useful to the cause.

"Did you report, Colonel?" he asked Flachier.

"I did." The older man seemed to think a moment: "I might as well tell you we're not going on to Singapore. We start north again tomorrow night."

"Back to Tien-Mafu?"

"Our destination is a secret. Even to you."

"What about fuel, oil, my motor?"

"They'll be attended to. They have a mechanic here who was seven years in the army aviation." Fletcher rested his slim hand on Norbert's arm. "We have to trust the skill of others. I trust yours, do I not? Debreuil can't have us wandering all over the place. We might be seen."

"We take—" Norbert held his thumb toward Madame Hoffner's door. "She might manage to go on by herself."

Flachier shook his head.

"No. She comes along. And a new passenger." The smile appeared. "By the way, he may not like to come with us. If there is any sort of a fuss, just keep out of it, and watch."

CHAPTER III

THE FIFTH PASSENGER

THE man arrived with Debreuil by mid-morning the following day. Whatever value Chanod placed on him, and it must have been considerable to motivate the trip and a change in plans, could not be proved by his appearance. A more insignificant silhouette of a clerk could not have been imagined. He appeared tall at first, because he was very thin, but he was not very much taller than Flachier.

When he had removed his cheap topee, his skull showed, bald, round, with odd, lumpy ridges. Large ears flapped from his head, his eyes were soft, an odd, liquid brown. Norbert thought he was a mixed-breed, probably had had an Annamite grandmother.

"This is Comrade Labbey," Debreuil announced.

The newcomer bowed to the women, shook hands with Flachier and Norbert. His hand was long, thin, his fingers bony. There were scars on his wrists. He sat down, accepted a cup of coffee and a cigarette, waited quietly. The ledgers, the writing-case, which he had brought along as camouflage, he laid on a small table.

"What does Chanod want of me?" he asked suddenly. "You might as well come to the point. I know he doesn't do anything for nothing."

"You don't want to take that attitude, Labbey," Flachier said. "I know it's not your habit to be respectful to your superiors, but you must admit that Chanod is a case apart."

"He's tormented by personal ambition."

"That's your opinion." Flachier indicated Debreuil. "You call him *Monsieur* in public for your own safety, don't you? We'll get along much better if you are polite with us also."

"Oh." Labbey smiled. "If I am under threat of death, I'll use whatever terms you desire. General, Master, My Lord." He indicated the women. "Must they be here?"

"No." Flachier smiled. "If you ladies would go for a short stroll—thank you. Monsieur Debreuil has instructed his men to guide you. If there is any alarm, one will give you instructions, and you obey him." He waited until Madelaine and Nadia had gone down the stairs. "Feel better?"

"You know it's a woman who talked too much and got me spotted." Labbey

shrugged. "What does General Chanod want of me?"

"You participated in the manifestations of the Viet Nam Cong San Dang, and have held an important post in the Viet Nam Cach Menh thanh nien Dong Chi Hoi?"

"You know it, so why ask me."

Norbert started to understand. The first society mentioned was the Annamite Communist Party, the second was the association of youths for the revolution. He knew now who Labbey was, remembered reading his fiery articles in *La Volonté Indochinoise*. Labbey, who had in fact native blood, had been involved in a number of scrapes with the French police, and had been sentenced to death, by default, by a tribunal at Hanoi. He was presumed to have incited to riot and murder at a number of places.

"You are still in touch with your friends?"

"You'd know I was lying if I denied it. I'm still alive, so I'm still of the same mind."

"You are aware, probably, that I have been in charge of General Chanod's Intelligence for several years. I happen to know that the Central Office of the Political Police of Indo-China, at Hanoi, has the *dossiers* of some twenty thousand political chieftains of your beliefs, and in addition, more than sixty thousand cards on record of the youths' movement. In the tumult following the Japanese occupation, many of those files were lost, mislaid."

"I'm sure I haven't got them."

"I know that. But you do have a tremendous memory. You could probably recite the names of hundreds of towns, villages, and the cell chieftain of each. You know those who were known by the Secret Police and those who escaped detection, who can work without fear that they are watched."

"You flatter me." Labbey bowed ironically. "There are times when I can remember a place name, or a face. This, I fear, is not one of them."

"You were nominated recently as—shall I say commissioner—for a large number of your comrades. The real head for Cochin-China, by the way, is a Cantonese, living at this address, in Cholon." He laid a paper before Labbey, who nodded. "He started out, years ago, in China, with Karakhan."

"Your information is correct."

"You people have arms in Indo-China, rifles, sub-machine guns and even heavy machine guns. You have an organization. It was directed against us at one time. The Japanese are here now. What do you intend to do?"

"I don't know anything about arms. As you know, I am a propagandist, a writer."

"What did you study in Moscow between 1930 and 1934?"

"The Russian language. The Communist Doctrine."

"And nothing military?" Flachier grinned. "I rather thought they gave you an all-around training."

"What do you wish me to do?" Labbey answered the grin with a faint smile of his own. "Start sabotage, guerilla warfare, against the Japanese? Granting that I know anything about it, conceded that it would be too early, when they have reserves massed here and could crush uprisings by force of arms in forty-eight hours of massacre. They will attain their objectives, because they're thorough, well prepared and ardent. They have everything in plenty. Occasional losses would be trivial just at present. Later, when they start to feel the drain on their economic system on this all-out war, as they were feeling it on their partially mobilized resources for the Chinese Campaign, sabotage, raids, will serve."

"I understand that. But these factors we mentioned should be known elsewhere, by people who can use them."

"The people who can use them know of them."

"We disagree on that. General Chanod is curious."

"He'll learn nothing from me."

"WELL, see." Flachier took out the little phial, swallowed a pill, shook another into Labbey's hand. "True, this visit is interfering with your habits. This will help you." The colonel had made no visible sign, but Norbert noticed that

Debreuil had moved closer to the seated guest. "You make a written record of your instructions, of your communications with agents, don't you?"

"I know better."

"Yet, you who just now denied having a fine memory, must hold communications with several dozen agents. You must have some sort of a check on their obedience. And you must have a list."

"You can search me and my quarters."

"For an excellent reason: The things are not on you nor in your rooms." Flachier extended his finger. "What are those books?"

Labbey did not even turn.

"Don't quite know. Picked them up at random, before coming here. Debreuil told me I had to have some visible motive to come here to the clearing. He suggested those ledgers himself."

"Was there any sort of a choice?" Flachier asked Debreuil.

"Labbey picked them out himself."

"Hand me the top one." Flachier took the book in his hands. "Lists of names. A register of laborers, I suppose. With the daily check on presence or absence. Who consults those books? Do you check them, Debreuil?"

"Well, they're not subject to audit. The totals are carried over under operating costs, labor. I sign the pages, but to tell the truth, as long as the figures appear about right, I don't really examine them. Gets tedious, so many at four-fifty per day, so many at six-fifty." The planter added: "Occasionally, I check laborers' lists from the foreman's sheets, but never when entered in the permanent book."

"Then we'll find our list in there," said Flachier. "A clever man always hides things in an obvious spot. Right, Labbey? Of course, eh? You must not presume everyone else to be an imbecile." He laid the ledger aside, asked for the next one. "Bookkeeping, food, drink—splendid. I wonder whether a series of reagents properly applied would not bring out something."

Labbey was a good loser, for he laughed.

"I wouldn't wonder, Colonel. You must have an excellent man watching me here."

"No one watches you, my friend. Your own desire for safety keeps you here. As for knowing that you wrote with invisible ink, I had but to read certain items in a purchase list you sent to Saigon. I am in the business myself, and I know the use of certain chemicals. So we already have certain information here."

"Certain, certain, you are fond of the word." Labbey indicated the books. "But I don't think you'll read either list or reports very easily."

"You might be surprised." Flachier closed his eyes, joined the tips of his fingers. "Let's guess. The list of names will be Chinese renditions of native Annamite names. The reports will be written in *quoc-ngu,* Annamite syllables rendered in our alphabet, somewhat complicated by a letter-substitution code."

"Who told you?" Labbey was leaning forward, tense.

"No one. You make the mistake of many intelligent men. Having an un-

usual combination of knowledge, you forget that you yourself can be studied. You dared not use Russian or German, familiar to too few of your people. The Kwang-Si tongues do not spread everywhere—that left classic Chinese, Annamese and French. Sufficient against the imported French police, yes, but not with us."

Labbey had recovered somewhat. "You won't break that code."

"We won't need to. You'll translate for us."

"I?" Labbey smiled defiantly, extended his skinny wrists. "Your humane secret police made those scars. Then they inserted a thin wire into my body and ran an electric current through it. Did I talk? You know how little I dread death. And I can will myself not to feel pain."

"You were stronger then. You have a weak point now."

"What?" Labbey was amused, scornful.

"The laborers sweat and smell, you have the drudgery of banal work to keep up your pretense. You dare not read books that interest you, the others you detest. The nights are long, the heat is great. One night—" Flachier waved his hand casually, "one night, one tries a little pipe, again the next, two pipes on the third. From your appearance, I believe you've reached forty or more."

Labbey leaped forward, so rapidly that Debreuil, who had been alert, had no time to catch him. Norbert saw the flash of metal—the knife had been hidden in his sleeve. He started toward the man, but Flachier had extended his foot, rapped the edge of his boot beneath Labbey's knee.

Then the planter grasped his "clerk," struck him in the jaw. The fellow slumped face down, the blade slithered under a couch. He lay like a bundle of rags and bones on the matting.

"Hope you didn't kill him," Flachier said. He knelt, looked up. "No, he's all right. Guard him carefully until he's in the plane. No need to tie him. When he comes to, he'll need a pill, and I am the man who has pills."

"WE MUST arrive two hours after dawn," Flachier said.

"For the distance you mentioned," Norbert protested, "we'd have to start from here at three in the morning, in the dark. Now, I don't mind telling you that landing here safely was a piece of good luck. I won't undertake to lift the plane out of this clearing without daylight, and it won't be easy."

"Raoul did it," Flachier stated.

"True," Debreuil put in. "Remember, Flachier, the machine did not go from here, but from the field at the plantation. The field is much longer, wider, and we could use automobile headlights."

"Yet it must be done, orders!"

"I'll obey. But we'll crack up." Norbert shrugged. "I'm willing to risk my life and yours, but my wife doesn't get into that machine if we take off in the dark." He indicated the top of the trees. "Even in daylight, they'll be hard to clear. You can try a chandelle with a Potez limousine and five people, but you can't guarantee results."

Flachier walked back and forth on the edge of the field a few moments, as if to control himself. Then he halted before Norbert and caught his glance.

"You know, you are the technician here. I have orders, and they'll be carried out. If I am alive. And those orders include your wife. I give you my word that if you do not undertake to carry out the orders, you won't live long. And neither will your wife."

Norbert reddened.

"I suppose you'll use that dirty instrument on us. It's a pretext. You might as well order me to leap into the moon. I'll try to take off blind, without my wife, or you can go to hell."

"You have five minutes to make up your mind," Flachier said.

Norbert looked at Debreuil. The man returned his glance without hostility, but without pity. There were six natives nearby, stocky, half-nude Cambodians, and many more were within call. If Debreuil gave the order, he would be seized, held. And the planter would give that order upon a nod from Flachier. Yet to take off from this spot, which

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narrowed here and there to scarcely twice the width of the wings, in the dark, was foolish, suicidal. He realized that he had made a safe landing by a miracle. His wing-tips could not have missed the bamboo growth by four feet as he rolled to a stop. That split the safety margin into one thirtieth of one second.

He saw the Potez crumbled against the trees, the crash to the ground, the rising flames. And himself, Madelaine, the others, roasting uselessly in the pyre. His mind darted to a solution. He must find something. He was aware that Flachier was somewhat mad, like every man in the grip of a great purpose. There was a field at the plantation, which Raoul had used. But that was fifteen miles away, through impassable jungle, and even if the machine could be partially dismounted, weaved along the narrow trails, the Japanese were there.

"There is a possibility," he announced at last.

"Talk fast. You have one minute and a half."

"We can start before dark, cruise about during the night and make our destination at the time agreed."

"You are sure?"

"These machines did Saigon-Bangkok-Calcutta in the thirties. With a much heavier load. It would have one inconvenience. The Japanese could tell the approximate starting point, if they spotted us rising."

Flachier and Debreuil exchanged smiles.

"That'll be all right," the planter said. "I think I can square matters. Raoul told me once about holding back a plane with ropes, to gather power or something—"

"I'll try it without," Norbert replied. "Where's the machine?"

DEBREUIL led the way to the far end of the field. The plane had been camouflaged from observation with bamboo screens and green matting. The tanks had been filled. Norbert checked the wires, the connections. He could see that whoever had tended the motor knew his business.

An excellent lunch was served at the house. There were flowers on the table, napkins, silverware. Madelaine and Nadia looked very well in white dresses.

Norbert experienced a sense of unreality. The conversation was banal enough, because Madelaine made up for lost time and asked questions of Debreuil. She had a calm, almost irritating way, all her own, of dismissing the war, danger, killings from her mind. If she remembered that they were within less than twenty miles of their enemies, that her husband and the other men would be executed if caught, she hid it very well.

She amazed her husband by talking about rubber plantations with some authority. When he expressed surprise, she reminded him that her father had served in the Customs in Cambodia. She discussed latex, cernamby, cambium, forced production and nurseries. Debreuil told stories of raids on his trees by huge deer, of damage caused by the elephants.

Labbey, who ate very little and smoked a great deal, slid into a lecture on the hardships of the laborers. He cited salaries and profits. Debreuil listed the expenses of his company, the taxes paid to the State, the thousand and one wiles of natives to obtain pay without work. "You undermined us, you propagandists, you caused labor trouble. Living quarters, cleanliness, pay, everything was far better than anything they'd had at home. We had hospitals for them. Now, let them kick to the Japanese! You had them so set against the French that it was useless to try to fight."

"I suppose you'd have stopped the Japs with fifteen thousand Frenchmen and fifty thousand native militia?" Labbey was grinning. "You see, when we did not pass the word to resist, we knew something of Japan's real strength, which many others did not know."

"They've changed masters and will regret us."

"Not for long. What are two, three, five years in the sweep of history? It is one system against another. Thirty-odd years ago, Okakura wrote of the Japanese ambitions, to which we oppose—"

Flachier led Norbert to the veranda.

"You wouldn't think that Debreuil

had been sheltering that fool for almost four years. Labbey, then under his native name, was being pursued hard. Chanod decided to save him, although it was Labbey's party and its papers that hounded him out of the Army. Chanod does things like that, as a sort of a speculation, he says. The last place the cops would look for Labbey would be on a rubber plantation run by a bird like Debreuil for a powerful syndicate in Paris. Debreuil acts like a simple man, but he was invited to lunch by the governors, whenever he was in Saigon, Hue or Hanoi. Right thinking, Cross of Fire member in France. But he served under Chanod during the war—the Not-So-Great War.

"Now, the odd thing is that Debreuil likes Labbey. He was asking me what we intended to do with him, saying he's more crazy than mean." Flachier shrugged. "And the guy's a capitalist. That's why he can take chances with the Japs. Dough is dough, and a millionaire's hide is more respected even here than that of a poor guy. Did you see Nadia make eyes at him?"

"Well, here or in Singapore, she has to make a new connection." Norbert shrugged. "Hoffner's crazy about the dame. I don't understand why he let her go. He is realistic enough to know you don't teach a cat to eat grass."

Flachier looked at Norbert for a moment.

"You deem that it was unselfish concern for her that caused him to let her go? You're still very young, aren't you?"

CHAPTER IV

FORCED LANDING

LATE in the afternoon, the party repaired to the plane. Coolies stripped off the camouflage. Norbert looked at the crests of the trees to note the direction of the wind. Then, as he helped Madelaine in, she called brightly: "All aboard for Singapore."

"You didn't tell her?" Flachier asked.

"No."

"Which shows that one can never rely upon anyone to run true to form. However, that's taken care of—" He shook hands with Debreuil. "I'll tell the boss you're on the job. Sure they'll swallow the yarn?"

"Why not? Good-bye, Norbert. When this quiets down, bring your wife again and I'll show her a plantation! Three million trees and growing. Also, we have hunting as good as up your way—but you've been in Cambodia before—" The planter threw an arm around the skinny Labbey. "So long, you slob, and if you're ever in need of a crust, come around."

"Next time, I'll be doling out the bread, bourgeois."

"And we'll all be as healthy as you are!" He kissed Nadia's hand. "If you appear on Earth again, my angel, please do so where I am—and when I have less to attend to."

"Promised, Jean."

Norbert applied the brakes, engaged the starter. The motor started, picked up. The field ahead was clear of obstructions. He waved his hand a last time, felt the machine straining, released it and started to roll at great speed. He took off in good style, cleared the trees by a good margin. Due to the orientation of the field, he found himself cross-wind, a few feet above the leafy crests. The controls felt "mushy," loose, the down-draft tugged at the plane's belly.

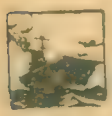
A man is not afraid at those moments, because his hands, his brain, are occupied. It is later, at night, just before going to sleep, that the mind relives those seconds. Norbert could literally feel the wheels brushing the tops of the trees, could not jockey the sagging Potez upward more than a few feet. He took a chance, banked and turned, the left wing-tip flashing against the green, headed into the wind. Even then, the machine remained unwieldy, bobbed up and down like a rubber ball, as if the suction of the immense forest was seeking to pull them out of the sky.

Then, foot by foot, he started to climb, but he did not dare turn back as yet, he needed more clearance. And he was vaguely aware that Flachier was settling down at his side, as if nothing were amiss, fussing with the radio, with his yellow ulster, with a blanket.

Under him, the forest suddenly gave way to rectilineal patches of green, slashed and separated by silvery threads, the thousands and thousands of *hevea* trees of the plantation, rolling to the horizon. He was rising at last. But underneath him, and to the right, appeared buildings, the long smoke-sheds, the plant where the rubber was treated. In these few minutes, he had reached the main establishment, which was guarded by the Japanese.

"One thousand fifty meters," he read.

Far below, he saw the darting flames of a machine gun, then other streaks of fire kindled in several spots. The Japs were alert, had opened fire without hesitation. He rose higher and higher, and the danger was not great.



THE setting sun was flooding the sky with colors. He turned away from it, headed east. Complete darkness was almost a full hour away. Soon, he saw the Great Lake scintillating in the distance, like a ruddy mirror. He scanned the sky for hostile aircraft, saw none. The Japanese probably kept their active flyers close to the vulnerable spots, the seacoast, the shore of the Gulf of Siam.

"We're getting publicity this time," Flachier shouted. "Watch yourself—they have a field at Melouprey."

Norbert climbed, two thousand five, three thousand, four thousand meters. The chill of the outside started to creep into the machine. He fastened the zipper of his flying-suit. He heard the door of the cabin slam shut behind him above the roar of the motor. He knew that the Potez was a winging speck in the diminishing light, that his chances of escaping discovery, interception, were increasing.

Then night fell, like a cloak. Below him, he saw clouds gleaming faintly in the starlight, and farther down silvery tracings of rivers and streams, dividing the shadows into irregular patches.

After a long time, Flachier removed his right glove, scribbled on his pad. *Might be safer not to go too near the coast. They may have plane-carriers in the region, and we'd have twenty or thirty machines on our necks. Nice work, old man. Bad moment when we were pumping above the bush.*

Norbert looked at his companion with quick gratitude. So, he had not been alone during those hard minutes. And Flachier had said nothing, given no sign of alarm, although he understood what might occur.

The advice to keep some distance from the sea was good. Yes, naval aviation would be more alert than the land flyers, because the vessels were more exposed. A Japanese battleship had been sunk in the Philippines by an American bombing machine, and the Japanese themselves had demonstrated the danger from the air. On land, they would be more quiet—save for a few raids by the British in Siam, one or two ventures into northern Indo-China by flyers from the Burma Road patrols, the invaders had not been annoyed to any extent.

At nine o'clock, Flachier passed him sandwiches and a thermos bottle filled with coffee. Norbert circled above Annam in immense rings, sometimes shutting off the motor and gliding through the night for several minutes. Then Madelaine came, shouted to Flachier, who went into the cabin, probably to converse with Labbey and to give him a pill. The girl crouched beside her husband, pointed at the map questioningly. He laid the tip of his finger on their approximate location.

She indicated Singapore, looked at him wonderingly. He shook his head, touched the north, in the Tonkin. "Are we going back?" she asked.

"I don't know. Don't think so." He paused, then said: "What's she doing?"

"Reading. Don't know what. A book in Russian. Debreuil was quite gone on her, don't you think? He's a nice man. Even if he is skinny. What did they do to that poor man last night?"

"They killed him."

"How horrible! But I guess they had to. Hugues, do you think the Japs will take Singapore?"

"I think it's too well fortified. But all these guys think they'll take it. But not for a while. Not before we get there and out again—"

"Do you have to fight again?"

"Don't worry. If the Boches didn't kill me, the Japs won't."

"Where will I go?"

"South Africa, maybe."

"I have an uncle in Algiers. Is that far?"

"Quite a walk. Ten thousand kilometers."

She left as Flachier returned. Norbert was irritated, because she was thoughtless, not ignorant. She had studied geography, had contrived to receive diplomas. But she caught at a word, as at "Africa" just now, and chained it with some miscellaneous memories without reflecting further.

The hours passed, the motor droned. Norbert had not led a quiet life, but this was the strangest plight he had ever found himself in, circling to kill time above jungle and rivers. Once, far below, he saw the flickering of another plane's exhaust. But the stranger, going due north at great speed, soon vanished.

"Who was Raoul?" he asked Flachier.

"Aviator. No chicken, either. Fought in the other war. Good pilot." The older man had raised his voice because of the motor. "You may remember him. Had a row with an official of his line. Fat chap, middle-aged, nasty temper and a weak heart. Beat him up, and the guy died in a few days. Came to us. Flew this machine and another we had. Left us to go to France in 1939, for the war. Made it too. Must be dead, haven't heard from him since the debacle."

"Debreuil asked about him—"

"Thought he might have come back."

"I say—the Japs must know where we came from now. Will Debreuil be in trouble?"

"No. He's told them that he acted with a gun at his head. Said Labbey asked him to go to the forest house under some pretext and that he found the plane already there. The Japs will wire description and fingerprint notes to Saigon, and will identify Labbey as Red agent. Debreuil will swim through it."

DAY was an hour old.

Norbert flew northeast on a course ordered by Flachier. The colonel had the map, and was comparing the ground below with his notes. The eastern sky was a flood of red and orange, and yellowish green was creeping westward.

"Are we going back to Tien-Mafu?"

"No. Same direction."

There were pinkish clouds below and enormous white masses higher and to the left, like cliffs of wool streaked with blue clay. Here and there, the earth was veiled with gray-blue mist that shredded to reveal pits of brilliant greens and patches of buff soil. Drafts pumped up and down, and the Potez would drop a couple of hundred feet, leap as high again. Norbert realized that he was tiring, that his grip on the control was not as sensitive as it might have been.

Mountains were in sight to the north, hills swelled beneath them, the bony range that runs up and down the Peninsula like the spine of an animal. There were mirror-like rice-fields, streaks of dark and white smoke above human habitations, villages, towns. Asiatic millions were swarming down there, sweltering in the heat.

Ahead, Norbert suddenly discerned specks which grew rapidly. Planes. And in this region, there was no doubt that they were Japanese machines, fighting machines. He looked anxiously at Flachier, started to speak.

"I see them. Expected to pick them up around here. Carry on." Flachier was calm.

"Straight ahead?"

"Straight ahead."

Through the churning of the motor, Norbert could hear the excited voices of the women. Madelaine came to the door and screamed the news: She saw planes following them.

Norbert's palms moistened, his fingers trembled. He knew that it was a matter of time before he was forced down. And after that, he would be identified, and executed. What would become of his wife? Well, he could ask to see a French administration official, place her in his care. She would be as safe there, safer to tell the truth, as under bombardment at Singapore or exposed to torpedoes on a ship at sea. His own end he had accepted long since, but could not believe in. This was not the last sunrise for him.

Oddly, the Japanese planes ahead swerved out of his path. Only one machine came on, a small, compact, very swift plane.

"Nakajima 97—" Flachier announced.

A pursuit ship, equipped with several machine guns. Japanese planes were not so fast as the latest models of other nations, that was true, but this one probably could pass three hundred and sixty kilometers, while the best he could do was under two hundred. The Jap flew straight for the Potez, lifted a bit to soar over it, swerved and returned, keeping even. Norbert could see the brown face of the pilot through the composition glass of the hood. The man looked at him, made no sign, simply flew alongside for some seconds before speeding ahead.

"Wanted to make sure we had no guns," Norbert thought. He called to Flachier: "Why doesn't he go on and shoot?"

"They've ordered us to proceed to Lao-Kai for inspection." Flachier indicated the radio. "As long as we keep on course, they'll just watch us."

"Are we going there?"

"Don't worry."

"I never worry," Norbert said loudly. Flachier remembered also, and broke into a laugh.

The Jap banked, circled back, passed beneath the Potez, reappeared on the right side. Norbert understood what the pilot was thinking: This was a target. Even in peacetime, when he had flown a military machine, he had been tempted to fly close to passenger ships. Civilians were timid fatheads, and it was legitimate to make them a bit nervous, when one was twenty years old and handling a fast, murderous engine. Several times, the Jap gained a few hundred yards, turned and dived straight at the Potez. Then he tired of the game, flew alongside long enough to grin, and then kept at a safe distance.

"I wish this was a Spitfire," Norbert grinned. "We'd have a little fun." Presumably, he was flying to keep a date with a firing-squad, yet Flachier's attitude reassured him.

THE country below was growing more and more mountainous. Somewhere in the blue haze to the north was the Chinese frontier. And across the border was Tien-Mafu. Flachier was scanning the map with great attention, looking down. He rose and went into the cabin, returning very soon. He buckled on the safety-belt and gestured for Norbert to do the same. Then he scribbled:

Simulate motor trouble. When I give you the word, drop as if out of control. Straighten out at five hundred and head for small clearing on hillside, white stone, small pagoda. As Norbert finished reading this, Flachier passed him another note. *Be ready to change directions at my signals. You might mistake another clearing for right one. Mistake of a kilometer would be fatal.*

Norbert nodded understanding.

A moment later, the motor missed a first time, caught on again. The machine lost altitude, lifted, kept level for a short minute, then there followed a series of coughs and sputters. The Japanese turned back, came close. The pilot exchanged gestures with Flachier, pointing north. In return, the Frenchman gesticulated, jabbing his index toward the motor, shaking his head.

"He has no instructions to cover this," he shouted to Norbert. "He's been ordered to shoot us if we tried to escape, but he can't be sure we haven't motor trouble."

For a few moments, the motor turned perfectly, the Japanese resumed his lead. Flachier was muttering to himself, consulting the map, scanning the ground through field glasses. He motioned with one hand, to encourage Norbert to try again. The engine missed again and again, the Potez bobbed down and up. The Jap hovered near, and it was odd how much impatience, irritation, could be discerned in the precise movements of the metal bird with the sun emblem.

"He'll shoot easy," Norbert thought.

At last, Flachier pointed downward.

Norbert shut off the motor completely, put the machine into a spin. He counted the turns, brought her out, dropped her

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once more. He had been through acrobatic training in the army, and he felt that he was faking a struggle against a forced landing to perfection. Below, jungle and streams spun in an immense, multicolored wheel, the shadows shifted amazingly. And every few seconds, he had a glimpse of the Nakajima, following him down.

Altimeter: Five hundred meters.

He jerked out of the spin, slid forward, bounced upward, sagged almost to the tops of the trees. His eyes were clear, the rustling in his ears dwindling. The air screamed outside the cabin. He looked for the clearing.

"Right, two degrees right, that's it, that's it—"

Norbert saw the landmark which Flachier had been waiting for even before he spotted the clearing—the junctions of two streams forming an almost perfect Y. On one branch rose a tall knoll tufted with thick forest, and near its top appeared a gash in the green. He saw several buildings, emerald tiles glittering, and a ledge of rock almost white as pure chalk.

It was not the place for a landing, but this was not the time to argue. How much would be left of the machine afterward could be surmised sadly, but he had not been ordered to land intact. They must know what they were asking of him.

He could hear the roar of the other plane's motor very near, the machine came between him and the sun several times. He straightened a last time, skimming the foliage with his wheels, dipped sharply. The ground leaped at him, there was a first tremendous bounce, another, then he steadied her and rolled bumpily for a second before the tip of his left wing scraped the higher ground, snagged and forced the Potez to describe a crazy half-circle. When the crackling ceased, he saw brown earth, tufted with coarse grass, not fifteen feet from him.

"Let's get out," Flachier suggested.

Norbert had to push the door upward to force it open. He dropped to the ground. Nadia landed in his arms a moment later, then Madelaine arrived, giggling nervously. Flachier handed down bags and bundles, then assisted Labbey over the edge. They stood dumbly, then tested their limbs for injuries. All had been shaken, no one was hurt.

"But she won't fly again," Norbert announced.

The thunder of the military machine's motor broke out above them. The Japanese covered the clearing in a flash, turned, and came back, flying very low. They could see him waving his hand warningly.

"Wants us to move," Flachier interpreted.

The five headed for the pagoda, a hundred yards up the slope. The Jap returned, and the hammering of the machine guns broke out, the fleeciness of the tracers hung in the sunshine. The upright wing was riddled, then the cabin. Inside ten seconds, the wreck was on fire. And the Jap war machine flew away.

The Jap returned, machine guns hammered. . . .

THE group entered the pagoda, walked through the principal room, before the altar on which sat an image of Buddha, with one fat hand held up in admonition or benediction and what appeared like an ironic smile on his lips. They passed into a vegetable and flower garden through a small gateway, and an old priest came to meet them down the tiled aisle. He wore a yellow robe, was completely shaved, head, lips, chin and eyebrows. He was calm, dignified, as if nothing unusual had happened, as if he had heard neither the crash, the motors nor the shooting.

He bowed to the newcomers, holding his hands together, greeted them in the local dialect. He led them to a smaller building, where a young boy, nude save for a scarlet loin-cloth, was setting dishes on three small, low tables. Then he addressed the women, lifting his hand.

"Beyond that door, you will find my humble approximation of a bathroom, ladies."

"You speak French well, father," Madelaine said.

"I served in the Annamite *Tirailleurs*, Madame. Like a number of your own officers, I have exchanged the sword for the censer."

The words were not humorous in themselves, but uttered in French, by that brown, leathery old face, produced a comic effect. Norbert suspected that the veteran had assumed the yellow robe only on the surface. For the eyes, the fierce mouth, were those of a splendid brigand.

"You have weapons for us, father?"

"Yes, my son." The priest went to a corner of the room, opened a chest. "Let your eyes behold and your brave hearts rejoice."

There were two Lebel carbines, cavalry model, and many boxes of cartridges. Also, two service pistols and loaded clips.

"I have had a meal prepared for you according to your tastes. Meat and rice, and fruit."

Flachier was testing the breech mechanisms of the weapons, which were oiled and worked smoothly. "As soon as the shooting starts, father, you better go into the forest. Those people are ruthless, your robe marks you as not one of our party."

"They wage war, that is all," the Buddhist said with a gentle smile. "The fact of killing is what is horrible, not the methods or means. I will send the boy away, but I shall remain. This is my abode. Whether I live or die is not my choice. We are all in the hands of the Perfect One."

The meal was excellent. Labbey and the priest discussed points of doctrine in Mandarin. The two women, who like all women who have spent a week in the Far East, were experts in Oriental arts, discussed the hangings and the curios. There came another of those strange periods of calm so irksome to Norbert, when the minds of all seemed detached from the immediate problems.

"How do we get out of here?" he asked Flachier.

"In a hurry, after all our trouble com-

. . . Inside ten seconds, the wreck was on fire.

ing this far?" The colonel produced the map he had salvaged. "Here we are. The Japs have an outpost there—twenty-odd kilometers as the crow flies. But there are two ridges and two valleys in between. They will not send a small detachment on those trails. They'll have to wait for reinforcements. That means two days."

"They can come by air."

"And imitate your landing? They have too much respect for their material."

"I will send the boy away," the Buddhist said, "but I shall remain."

"Small machines could land on the flat stretch near the stream, four, five kilometers from here. Or they could drop men by parachute."

"That's what we expect them to do." Flachier touched the carbine leaning against the bench on which he sat. "We can defend ourselves. They won't bomb us, or machine-gun this place at random. You saw the pilot took care to warn us away." He nodded toward Labbey. "They had him right under their noses and let him get away. They know he was in Japan for several months, years ago, and that he may know men of their races affiliated with his party."

"You might have told me."

"And make you nervous at the prospect of a difficult landing in the morning?" Flachier shrugged. "Moreover, I am not supposed to tell you. We are not far from Tien-Mafu, Chanod's not an imbecile, he had some definite purpose in sending us to Cambodia and then recalling us, but I don't know all the answers.

"I have known our destination only since yesterday morning. From our instructions, I knew we were to permit ourselves to be seen by the Japanese. And that they were not to suspect we were headed for any place save Tien-Mafu. We are not isolated, I know. You saw the weapons produced. A lot of French military weapons have been hidden in this region. To occupy a district is one thing, to conquer it quite another."

"And the soul can never be conquered," the priest said.

Labbey nodded, Flachier shrugged.

CHAPTER V

THE SIEGE OF THE PAGODA

THE remote drone of planes vibrated in the sky.

"Nine forty-two, that's quick work," Flachier said. He rose and led the way out of the buildings. The crests of the trees still screened the machines from sight. The father will take Labbey and the two ladies to a vault beneath the pagoda. You will be absolutely safe."

"I'm staying with my husband," Madelaine announced, clutching Norbert's arm.

"Don't be a fool," Nadia said sharply. She caught the younger woman by the shoulders. "A scene won't help anyone, and you won't do anything save get in the way." Her blazing eyes rested on the young aviator. "No matter what you think of me, I like this kid and I'll take care of her."

"Thanks," Norbert said, and he hastened after Flachier, who stood in the open at the bottom of the worn and mossy steps of the pagoda. The planes were visible now, three large ones and two small pursuit ships. They passed high overhead, as if headed for China, then circled back.

Norbert loaded his carbine. But even with the familiar weapon in his hands, he felt a sense of futility. What good was resistance against overwhelming force? The non-combatants would have a better chance for life if the Japs were not infuriated by casualties.

"It'll be so many Japanese the less," Flachier said as if he read his mind. "There are millions, but one has to start somewhere." He stood not far from the wreckage of the Potez, turning on his heels to follow the flight of the planes. "I don't think they'll use machine guns, they probably have orders to take us alive. One thing you must grant them: They follow orders."

One of the pursuit ships, probably that which had escorted them earlier in the morning, dived for the clearing, flew low over their heads. So low that both men instinctively crouched. A blast from his machine guns would have dropped the Frenchmen, and as he did not fire, Flachier's surmise must have been correct.

"Don't shoot!" Flachier checked Norbert's reaction. "You couldn't hurt him and you'd give warning that we intend to fight a bit."

The plane made several trips. Then one of the big machines, which Flachier called a Mitsubishi, came down and circled the clearing for several minutes. It lifted again, went out of sight around the shoulder of the hill.

"They're trying to find out if we have a heavy machine gun. Careful people." The Frenchman smiled. "They sense something a little too pat, too smooth, in this situation. I bet they're trying to find us on the radio, to ask for our surrender."

Nothing else happened for twenty-five or thirty minutes. The planes flew back and forth, described circles, their motors roared in the sky. The red disks, which once had driven Norbert almost to madness, splotched the lustrous amber of their fuselages.

"Madame Hoffner has courage," Norbert remarked.

"North Szechuen Road in Shanghai either tempers them or breaks them." Flachier's eyes continued to follow the machines. "That's where I first saw our Nadia, one evening in—oh—oh—see here—"

There were moving blots against the light behind one of the large machines. The first paratroopers were on their way. The first chute opened, then another, a third, until there were a dozen floating down.

"Tried for the clearing—wind's blowing them away. They'll come down on the fringe of the woods—don't shoot until I do—fire in from the right—I'll take the left—"

"Yes, Colonel."

The men swung and spun beneath the yellow chutes. Norbert's throat tightened. He felt reluctant to shoot upon men momentarily helpless. Twice helpless, if what his companion said was true, that they had orders to shoot carefully. All must have seen the two men waiting below and must be doing some speculating.

The older man, carbine poised, was smiling. Naturally, a man who would inject cobra venom into another and leave him to swell and blacken and die, would have no hesitation now. Norbert lined his sights on the moving silhouette on the far right and fired immediately after Flachier. A slight move to the left, and there was the next target. He reloaded after burning the third cartridge, fired again. By now the parachutists were not two hundred yards off, dropping one by one to the jungle fringe.

THE first man struck the ground all in a heap. He must have been hit while in the air, for he did not move as the collapsing chute dragged him through the knee-high grass. Another caught in the foliage of a tall tree, the man dangling clear, like a corpse hanged on a gallows.

The parachutists were dropping to the jungle fringe, not two hundred yards off.

Then they were all down, and there was a queer billowing and flapping of fabric, unlike anything Norbert had ever beheld. Four or five figures rose and ran, and the two Frenchmen shot them down. After that, all grew quiet save for the rustling of the silk.

"Watch out, impossible we got them all—I fired fifteen shots—"

"Seventeen," Norbert announced.

They looked up. One of the big machines was gone, cargo unloaded. The other two were soaring higher. On the slope below them, the silken puffs had all collapsed. Seven on the ground, one hanging from a tree. The others had dropped into the jungle.

The pursuit ship hurtled close once more.

"Take a good look," Flachier grumbled. "Net result—zero."

Then, without consultation, the two rounded the gutted wreck of the Potez, trotted down the slope toward the nearest parachute. Both felt a powerful, unreasoning compulsion to see one of their enemies. Flachier checked himself briefly.

"Watch the others, Norbert."

"I can tell when they come low by the sound."

They found the soldier stretched face down in the grass, apparently unconscious. But he groaned when Norbert seized his shoulders and turned him over. One of his stumpy legs remained at an angle. They saw that he had not been touched by their bullets but had broken a limb on landing.

Flachier spoke to him in slow Japanese. The other answered. He seemed very young, nineteen or twenty, but his short body was broad and muscular. Norbert was surprised to see his chief loosen the water-bottle and place it in the injured man's hands, to hear his voice soften as he unmistakably gave reassurance.

"The poor little rat," he told Norbert in French. "He says he's afraid he won't get to war after all!" He picked up the fellow's sub-machine gun, a Japanese imitation of the German frame-stock job. And he took the ammuni-

tion sack. "We better get back now."

The two reached their observation post near the pagoda stairs.

"I wonder what the guys who dropped in the bush are doing. Too much to hope that all are wounded or hurt." Flachier examined the captured weapon, soon understood the mechanism. "Nice and light. Well in hand for a chap my size, if not for you. Watch this—"

The small plane sped across the clearing, tipped on one wing. The automatic weapon rattled out. As the Japanese hurled his machine skyward, Flachier shook with amusement.

"Too light to hurt him, but enough to scare him. I wonder if we shouldn't go down there and collect a couple more of these guns. No. We might not be lucky twice." He reflected a moment. "Hate to think of that guy with the fractured leg. Hurts like the devil."

"I know. I broke my—eh—" Norbert looked up, startled. "They're leaving—"

The remaining large machines had started southwest, and were not turning. They dwindled in the blue and left only the pursuit planes going back and forth at a safe altitude.

"They've dumped their men somewhere," Flachier said.

"Surely." Norbert looked about uneasily.

"On the other side of the hill, or we'd have seen them."

"Yes, of course."

"At least a kilometer of bush," the colonel resumed. "It'll take them a while to untangle themselves, group and locate the trails. It's eleven four. We have an hour or so to wait."

A great silence had settled upon the clearing. The pursuit machines were in sight, but the motors' drone was remote. The calls of birds, the chirpings and rustlings of insects were once more audible. And somewhere in the thick of that vegetation, stocky brown men had dropped from the sky, were hacking their way to the trails, forging ahead patiently, stoically.

"We're done for," Norbert said quietly.

"Brilliant deduction," Flachier snapped. "In any case, we still have something to do." He tapped the carbine. "Now, we don't know where they'll emerge. So any place is as good as any other."

"We could get on the roof."

"Yes. But it's rather exposed, and they might figure that Labbey would not take such a chance. We're as good to them dead as alive, remember, and we must keep them in doubt."

"Frankly, I don't see the use of all this," Norbert said wearily. "I've killed enough to satisfy me."

Flachier held the carbine in the crook of his arm as he lighted a cigarette. "How old are you?"

"Twenty-six. Why?"

"Ten years before you were born, I was within a second of death. That was in the Tunisian South. The year of your birth, in September, I was in a shell crater with seven other men and a couple of Bavarian snipers two hundred meters away. It rained and we were in mud. One by one, the others lost patience, tried to crawl away. I wallowed there from six thirty in the morning until eight at night. I lived, because I saw the use of living. A second of life is life itself."

STROLLING back and forth on the stretch of worn flagstones before the pagoda, smoking and gesturing, Flachier told stories of his experiences. Norbert listened with considerable impatience at first, then realized an important truth—there was nothing to be done save what they were doing. The buildings were devoid of openings suitable for loopholes, to hide in one of them now was to walk into a trap. And one face of the pagoda could not be said to be safer than another, as the enemy might arrive from anywhere.

The pursuit planes had gone, the sky was empty. Before long, the wild birds were flying above the leafage as usual. Norbert half-smiled. He had been brought up in the Tonkinese hills, had hunted with veteran natives, and knew the bush. When the Japanese, who were not jungle people, approached, he would know it.

"And crocodiles thirty feet long, Norbert. There is some Gascon blood in

me, but I'm not exaggerating. Well, a trader—"

Norbert wondered what Madelaine was doing, how she was bearing up. She had followed him into the hills, in exile. He was responsible for that. But how could he foresee that international war in the East would lead so soon to complete isolation? The Japanese armies had appeared mired in China, checked by the guerrilla warfare. Who had expected them to uncover such formidable striking strength?

Chanod pretended he was not surprised. But he must be.

"And a Bambara girl who—" Flachier broke off. "Here they come."

Norbert felt a ridiculous disappointment that the other had spoken first. He had noticed that birds were flying off from certain trees, alighting farther away to chatter excitedly. The colonel stepped back to pick up the Japanese automatic.

"I don't know if we're watched, Norbert. In case we're not, I'll go down to the plane"—he meant the wreck of the Potez— "and hide there. You go up these stairs, use that little niche behind the pillar."

The aviator obeyed. He braced his carbine against the stone upright, scanned the jungle fringe. Flachier, agile despite his years, had slid on his

Norbert was struck from behind, knocked flat.

belly beneath the blackened wreck. Farther down the slope, Norbert could see the parachutes and, here and there, the body of a man. The others were coming from some place to the right. There was the gap of a trail there, visible for ten or fifteen yards from his point of vantage.

The first Japanese appeared. He had discarded his parachute gear, was clad in shirt and khaki shorts. He wore an oddly shaped metal helmet and his face seemed to be veiled. Looking with more attention, Norbert saw that he was masked with drying mud, that the stuff was spattered all over him. Probably had landed in a wallow. As he neared the opening of the path, he crouched, finally progressed on all fours. Then he turned his head, evidently uttered a command, for several others appeared.

Flachier, some distance below, could not see them as yet. And although their faces lifted, and they must have scanned the pagoda, they did not see Norbert.

The leader squatted, talked to the others. Norbert lined his sights on his side, above the hip. He pressed the trigger, and the report slapped sharply, followed by a muffled echo. The Japanese slid down quietly, his legs straightened slowly, slowly. The others did not run back, but edged closer to the brush on each side. The Frenchman selected the next, and hit him. The rest decided to plunge into the undergrowth, out of sight.

There was a long wait, several minutes. Norbert dried his palms on the front of his trousers. His eyes roved steadily along the fringe, watched the grass tops. The pillar blinded him on the left side, and he wondered if the fellow across the way knew it and was taking advantage of it. He leaned out, craning his neck. He saw nothing, nothing happened.

Then Flachier's automatic opened up. Norbert could not see what he was shooting at. This kept up for a couple of minutes. And silence settled down again. Not quite complete silence, for the vibrations of the shots appeared to have flowed into the high room where the idol stood, and the place rustled with the ghosts of sounds.

Norbert turned his head, scanned the semi-obscurity. It was empty of life. The back door, visible from this angle, made a patch of brilliant light. He looked toward Flachier again. The colonel was backing out from under the plane. And right before Norbert's eyes, a man materialized out of nowhere. One second before, there had been no one save Flachier, then the fellow leaped on his back.

Norbert could not shoot, for fear of hitting his friend.

"Stay where you are!" the older man called out. He was not much taller, certainly was lighter and older than his opponent. But he was not getting the worst of the struggle, despite the fame of Japanese as tricky wrestlers.

He had contrived to bring his hand behind the neck of his adversary, was pulling his head forward over his shoulder, and was rapping him on chin and throat with the muzzle of the carbine. Norbert fired at another soldier who came running around the wreck. At the distance, an experienced hunter could not miss. Flachier gained his knees, his feet, the other hanging on, pushing his lacerated face against the Frenchman's stomach, to get away from the blows. Then there was a third man in the struggling group, a fourth.

They had crept up, keeping the wreck between themselves and the carbine in Norbert's hands. They had Flachier, that was certain, as the ex-lieutenant could not shoot into the thick of them. He looked beyond the plane, for other targets. He saw nothing.

Then it occurred to him that it was all over, that he was doomed, that he did not wish to remain alone. He decided to charge on the group, to make a last effort to free his chief. He left his cover, leaped down the stairs, took two strides.

He was struck from behind, knocked flat. He knew what had happened at once. The Japs had slid along the pagoda wall, waited for him to show himself. The fellow who had leaped on his back was kneeling on his shoulders now, someone was twisting the carbine out of his hand. There followed a blow on his neck, a bewildering spinning of lights, a few seconds of darkness.

WITHOUT perceptible transition, he was clear-headed, standing erect. He could taste blood in his mouth, felt the warmth of it trickling down his chin. He tried to bring a hand up to the sore spot, discovered that his wrists were lashed behind his back. A roundish, mustached brown face floated into sharper focus a few inches below his chin.

"You are prisoner," a voice said in English. "You understand? You must surrender. Prisoner."

"I understand, yes."

"I am Lieutenant Nukai. You are prisoner."

"I am prisoner," Norbert conceded. "Where is the other?"

"Right here, young man," Flachier said, in French. "Buck up—we couldn't last very long."

"Please to speak in English," Nukai suggested. "I do not understand French. No private speeching permitted." He was somewhat disheveled and battered. Probably one of those who had tackled Flachier. Another soldier handed him a large leather case, which he opened, to fish out several pieces of paper. He consulted them a moment, extended his hand toward Flachier and spoke. "You are Mister Durand-Hurmond, known as Flachier." He indicated Norbert. "You are Lieutenant Norbert Hugues."

"Can I see the picture?" Norbert asked.

"Yes, certainly." Nukai obligingly held up the paper. The photo attached showed Norbert in uniform. It had been taken many months before, on the steamer coming from France. These people surely dug up what they wanted. The Japanese politely turned to Flachier. "You wish to look yours?"

"No. I know you got it from the card of identity records in Saigon. It's rotten."

"There is another man, and I believe, two women. Where are they to be found, please?"

"We lost sight of them a couple of hours ago."

"They went away from here?"

"Something of the sort."

"I cannot believe. Travel is difficult in"— Nukai glanced at the jungle, hesitated— "in nature. I must look myself."

"Lieutenant Nukai," Flachier said, "I'll make a deal with you. You understand, a deal?"

"Yes. Commercial transaction profitable to both parties."

"Exactly. I'll tell you where to find the others, if you'll tell me how many of your men we hit, how many were hurt."

"I do not know precisely." Nukai concentrated. "We found seven dead. And we ourselves lost four. Total casualties cannot be known until full report. I promise exact figure later. Where are they? Have they arms?"

Flachier led the way to the stone trapdoor in the floor behind the altar. "Have your men lift it up, and I'll ask them to come. No need to use the guns, they are unarmed." The Frenchman bent over the opening. "Come on. It's all over."

Madelaine appeared first. She saw her husband at once, and went to him. She said nothing, but clung to his body a moment, then started to wipe the blood from his chin. Nukai seemed very pleased at finding Labbey, whom he compared carefully with several documents. At this moment, ten or twelve Japanese entered through the rear door. Their officer spoke briefly to Nukai and led his men out of the front.

"He will search for more casualties," Nukai announced. "He is of another party which leaped behind while we leaped before. He comes too late. That is luck. Miss,"— he indicated the sodden handkerchief in Madelaine's hand— "that is not clean. Your husband sit down." He issued orders to one of his men, who went out and returned with water in a tin basin. Nukai translated. "The ambulance says it is nothing. You have bite the tongue when struck."

"He seems nice," Madelaine stated, looking gratefully at the little officer.

"My wife doesn't speak much English. Lieutenant."

"Very well. She will speak nothing important." Lieutenant Nukai returned his attention to Madame Hoffner, who had produced a tattered League of Nations passport, a Shanghai card, other documents. "Miss Chechersky, you are in Indo-China without Hanoi visa."

Madame Hoffner-Chechersky smiled

and then broke into fluent Japanese.

"I told you she was clever—" Madelaine started automatically. Then she remembered the situation, and her voice broke. "Oh, Hugues, what will they do to you?"

"Nothing just now," Norbert replied. "They seem pretty well disposed. You'll be all right. They can't object to your going to live with our friends in Hanoi."

"Please don't worry, Madame Norbert," Flachier started.

Nukai broke off his conversation with Nadia. "Speak in English, please. There is exception between husband and wife only."

"We were just wondering where you'd take us, Lieutenant."

"We remain here. A superior to me is coming to ask questions. You are prisoners here." Nukai seemed to hesitate. "We can take away the laces. The soldiers will watch and shoot promptly if bad behavior." He brooded for words a moment. "Courtesy concession for comfortableness of all."

"Thank you."

A sergeant severed the cords. Norbert rubbed his wrists and broke into a smile. He felt a sense of triumph, of personal achievement. He had thought that he would never have his hands free again. The inevitable was postponed. Labbey, who had a guard all his own, joined the Frenchmen on the stone bench they occupied.

"This makes my seventeenth arrest." He smiled. "The second by the Japanese."

"Speak in English, please," Nukai asked over his shoulder. He was having some trouble questioning the old priest who now understood nothing but hill dialect.

CHAPTER VI

THE JAPANESE COLONEL

NORBERT had been telling his wife, for the fourth or fifth time, just what to do in case the Japanese "detained" him. Through his attorneys at Hanoi she would be able to obtain funds, either from his residue in the bank or from the sale of certain assets. The Japanese could accuse Madelaine of no crime.

Then Lieutenant Nukai was called outside the building. And while he was gone, a strange phenomenon came to pass. The sentry at the front gate grunted a few words, and the atmosphere, which had been almost friendly, changed. Labbey's guard led him to a far corner, the sergeant nearby motioned for Madelaine to join Nadia on another bench. When she delayed, he grasped her by the elbow and pushed her roughly in the direction desired.

Norbert's reflex to rise and intervene was checked by a sharp blow across the nape of his neck, delivered by a soldier behind him. He slumped back, half-stunned. The Japanese troopers, amiable enough a few minutes before, glowered and snarled.

"What's the matter with them?" Norbert started.

"No talk." The sergeant pointed a big automatic pistol at his head. "No talk."

Had they been attacked? No, for Norbert had heard no shots, no outcry. But they were under nervous tension, that was obvious. It could not be because of their casualties, for they had watched without much display of emotion and no manifestations against the prisoners when the wounded had been carried through the building.

Norbert's watch, as well as all his other belongings, had been taken away. But he judged the time to be between two and three o'clock in the afternoon, from the shadows, from the heat. Flachier's request for a cigarette, always granted before, brought only a furious glare.

At last, there came the sound of steps on the stone stairs, and a familiar clicking, which reminded Norbert of official receptions in a garrison city—swords and spurs. A group of men appeared in the gateway, advanced briskly into the main room. The soldiers stood like stone figures, breathless, at attention.

Only one man carried a sword, and he was not the center of attention. Evidently, he was merely an aide, an orderly-officer to the one in the lead, who wore a civilian topee, a white jacket, riding breeches and high laced boots. Nukai.

stiff as if he had been coated with caramel, flanked the new arrivals.

Labbey was brought forward first. Two soldiers guarded him now, very stern, very fierce. The Japanese civilian waved him away, and Flachier was led out. Another wave of the hand, and Norbert was prodded into action, checked before the newcomer. The brown man looked at him, gestured and that was all. He was hustled back to his bench.

"I've seen this guy somewhere," he thought.

Seen among Japanese, the fellow looked like a Japanese, the resemblance was precise. Yet his face was oval, his features somewhat aquiline. When he removed the topee to wipe his forehead, Norbert saw that the thick, straight black hair was touched with much gray. He was tall, for a Japanese, and his legs were longer in proportion to his torso than is usual in the race. Yes, Norbert had seen him before, and although he could not place him, he seemed to remember him as a pleasant companion. That is—that face was associated with pleasant circumstances. Just which?

He must be important, for it was with the news of his arrival that the Japanese soldiers had grown severe. Yet, in contrast with his military aide, he wore no decorations, no marks of rank.

The young Frenchman had another opportunity to examine the Japanese leader within fifteen minutes. He was called into the room in the priest's dwelling where his party had eaten that morning. The open door allowed plenty of light. Norbert remained standing, the other sat on a bench, legs crossed, arms folded.

"Your case has been settled for some weeks, Lieutenant Norbert." The man's French was excellent, but tinged with an amusing accent, as if he had learned it in Toulouse. The aviator restrained a grin—he would have seen everything possible, including a Japanese with a meridional pronunciation! "However, you might have information for me that would alter things."

"I don't believe so, *monsieur*."

"You may call me colonel. You understand, without doubt, that I can delay your execution. At my discretion, it may take place here, within three minutes, or at Hanoi in a few days. You know your own people have sentenced you to death, I suppose?"

"Yes, unjustly. I am punished for giving information I did not possess to someone I did not even know at the time."

"I know you are telling the truth, Lieutenant." The Japanese touched the tips of his fingers lightly together. "But what matters? Other charges would be brought, complicity, for instance, in the assassination of Colonial Administrator de Baucy. Any number of things. No, your life could not be saved legally. But if your life became necessary to Japan, I believe I could bring certain influences to bear."

"I don't think we need go much further, Colonel."

"One has to try, you know. Shall we say tomorrow morning? One thinks clearly at night."

"My wife is here. Could I ask you to—"

"As you will never see her again, you'd better put her out of your mind. Concern over a woman brings reluctance to die, reluctance to die brings weakness. Who knows, you might go so far as to give us information about Tien-Mafu. You may go." But as Norbert turned away, the Japanese recalled him. "A moment. We have met before. My memory is very good, yet I cannot place you."

"On a steamer on the Mekong, Colonel." Norbert smiled. "You were butler—or head boy—to a government engineer. Twelve years ago. Your master said you were so smart that you'd even copied his provincial accent. I gave you five piasters for tending to my gear."

"I remember. You were very young. And generous."

"Oh, not at all. Your work was worth it."

"Yes. What I do, I do very well."

Three soldiers took Norbert to a shack used for storing fruits and provisions. This was separated from the jungle only by a bamboo fence twelve feet in height. But someone had had the forethought to locate chains, and the aviator was locked to an upright by one ankle. The struc-

ture was light, covered with a leaf-roof, and the shaking and rustling would have warned the sentries at once of any attempt to escape.

ABOUT an hour later, Flachier joined him, was chained to another beam. He looked at Norbert, then grinned. "I bet I know what you are thinking about, youngster! Can't that devil plant a seed in your head, though. Worked on you through your wife, eh?"

"Sure. Gave me the night to think it over."

"He made no proposition to me. He says he'll hang me."

"Cheerful prospect." Norbert told him where he had met the colonel before. "And you can't blame the engineer for hiring him and taking him on his trips of inspection. A guy in a turban and loincloth doesn't look like a military expert."

"Yes, it's such old stuff that people never think it can happen to them. My father used to tell me a story about his home town. When the Prussians arrived, in 1870, the captain who organized the seizures of money and goods was recognized as a porter for the local inn from '67 to the declaration of war."

"What do you think of Nadia knowing Japanese?"

"Why not? She lived in Manchuria, at Mukden, at Harbin. You'd find she speaks Malay, also. Or most any other tongue you can name, enough to make small talk. And Chechersky's probably not her real name; those girls exchange passports, buy cards."

"What will they do with Labbey?"

"He is having a match with the Japanese colonel, just now. He came in as I was led out. In good fettle, because I gave him the box of pills. He won't talk of anything important. He's not afraid of torture, or death. But that Jap will see as I saw that he's been using opium. And he'll make him talk to get more. When the *yen* twists them, they'll do anything."

"Yes, he's saturated with the stuff." Norbert hesitated. "Do you think the sentry understands French?"

"No, I'm sure he doesn't. Even Nukai couldn't. These parachute fellows are probably taken from a regiment in transit through this region, headed for Malaya or Burma. Why?"

"Do you really expect something to happen—before—"

"I know something will happen."

"All right, I hope you know. But we are prisoners." Norbert held up his hand. "I'm willing to concede this is part of the plan. But why did we risk the fight? They had orders to be careful, true. But you are doubtless important to the scheme, whatever it is, and you might have been killed."

"My part is almost done. My death wouldn't matter much." The older man tapped his pocket for cigarettes, found none, sighed. "We landed here. The only way to reach us without long delay was to send parachute soldiers. If we had surrendered then, it would have been over by ten o'clock. The observation planes would have reported all calm by radio.

"And a seaplane, such as brought our

friend the colonel-butler, would have come to take Labbey. By this time, we would have been shot, Nadia and your wife would be in the hands of the soldiers, without control.

"But when we opened fire, it was reported to headquarters. And the same worry entered the mind of that colonel as was in our minds. Would the soldiers grow furious at their casualties and shoot to kill? So he did what any energetic chief could be expected to do—he said that he was coming in person, and held the officers responsible. You saw how careful of our welfare Nukai and the others were until he appeared.

"Labbey was very important, must be alive and in condition to be questioned. To avoid the excuse of mistaken identity, the colonel issued a blanket order to take us all alive and unhurt."

"Suppose he decides to take Labbey away this afternoon? The seaplane, or amphibian, at the river, could be at Hanoi by—"

"In my opinion, he would never reach the river."

"You believe that some of our men are near?"

"Use your head," Flachier replied with some impatience.

Norbert was eager to believe this. His feverish mind had been clutching at straws, and this was not a straw but a life-raft! This very anxiety made him obstinate.

"Wouldn't the planes have seen them? Suppose one of the parachutists had tumbled on them?"

"You're talking like an old woman." Flachier shook his head. "You know how much can be seen from the air over jungle. Suppose a parachutist did happen to land near a bunch of our fellows—before he recovered from his surprise, he'd be take care of. Now, shut up, I'm going to take a nap."

NORBERT suffered from a common French malady—skepticism. As the day wore on, he convinced himself that Flachier was more than half-insane from his abuse of drugs or was trying to keep him, Norbert, cheerful enough to make a decent showing at the end. That General Chanod had planned all of this in advance was a claim that did not stand analysis. So many things could have gone wrong.

No military leader worthy of the name would have based his plans on the hope that an old plane could travel almost one thousand kilometers in one direction, make a safe landing in the darkness, retrace almost its exact course, crash at the exact spot wanted, bring enemy parachutists—and so on and on. A broken landing-wheel, a forced landing not on schedule, the hasty trigger-finger of a Japanese pilot, any number of tenuous dust-specks could cause failure. No, success in war must rest on something more probable, more real, more permanent.

Then he was grinning bitterly. Something like the Maginot Line. That had been real and permanent enough! Now, its probable use for the future would be as a show for tourists, like the catacombs in Rome, and perhaps, in the deeper subterranean shelters, for the growing of mushrooms.

The next rat-thought that he invented to gnaw his brain was concerned with Madelaine. She was like putty in the hands of that sleek Nadia. A man like Chanod, who was middle-aged, might condone and even admire her unperturbed manner, her deep concern with small matters in the middle of a catastrophe. But to be tied to her, responsible for her, to feel that one was to die and leave her helpless! When she was informed he had been shot, tomorrow morning, she would weep bitterly and sincerely, he knew that. But somewhere in her head would be the plan for a mourning dress that would not, as she said, "smack of the village graveyard."

CHAPTER VII

THE TIGER'S HEAD

THE Buddhist priest brought them food late in the afternoon. If conversation between the two prisoners who were to die in the morning was permitted, it was forbidden between them and an outsider. After a first warning, which the

old man pretended not to understand, the soldier who accompanied him opened a gash on his shaven skull with the barrel of his pistol.

"Why did he do that?" Norbert wondered.

"Had a hard day," Flachier explained dryly. "Jumping from the plane into the jungle, losing friends. He doesn't hate us, because we're to die and pay in full. But he's testy. I understand him thoroughly, but I'll remember his face."

Yet the man returned alone a few minutes later, with some of the food salvaged from the Potez, and the big thermos bottle filled with hot coffee. This formed a fine dessert for the bowl of rice and meat. Madelaine had probably made the coffee out of the compressed tablets she carried everywhere.

Norbert handled the container lovingly. It was a wedding-present from an aunt. Its presence here was another proof of Madelaine's iron whim and singleness of purpose. She'd ask for that thermos back, and she would get it, too. Her second husband would have to take it along on picnics—

"Let's see that a minute."

Flachier unscrewed the bright cap, looked at it, then pulled out the big cork, which he passed to Norbert after inspection. The sides had been cleaned, and Madelaine had written in indelible pencil: *Darling: I am well treated. Thinking lots about you.* And his eyes filled with tears.

The sentries were changed just after dark. As the partitions of the shack left regular openings, the guard did not have to open the door to check on his charges. His steps would halt at intervals, the yellowish beam of a small torch would sweep their faces.

"They've probably kept Labbey in the vault," Flachier declared. He spoke to the sentry in Japanese, and after a while, the man consented to talk a bit. He charitably informed the prisoners that there was another sentry watching the rear of the bamboo fence. Then he said that he was twenty-four, had four children back home and a wife. He had not been in the parachutists very long, three months. He had volunteered for the training, so he would not be sent to China. No, he was not sorry to be here. This was not like fighting the Chinese. Japan had to beat Britain and the Americans to be allowed to survive. Yes, there were a few German instructors.

He gave six cigarettes for one of the tablets of chocolate sent by Madelaine, and asked the prisoners to hide them if there was an officer's inspection.

"How many men have you here?"

"Twenty-seven, counting two officers, and the colonel with his aides, that makes just thirty." He explained that Nukai was very pleased because he had made the capture, although he was not a professional officer like the other lieutenant.

Another man took his place around nine o'clock, and they were sorry to lose him. The new guard was a surly ape, who protested against their smoking and threatened to call the officers. He had a small flashlight too, and used it regularly. It was soon after he came on duty that Norbert tensed. The sounds in the jungle had changed. The change would not have been noticed by an ordinary European, but Norbert and Flachier had long experience.

Two creatures could cause the particular hush—a tiger or a human being. The forest folk made small difference between the two. And if it had been a tiger, there would have been the muffled hunting bark.

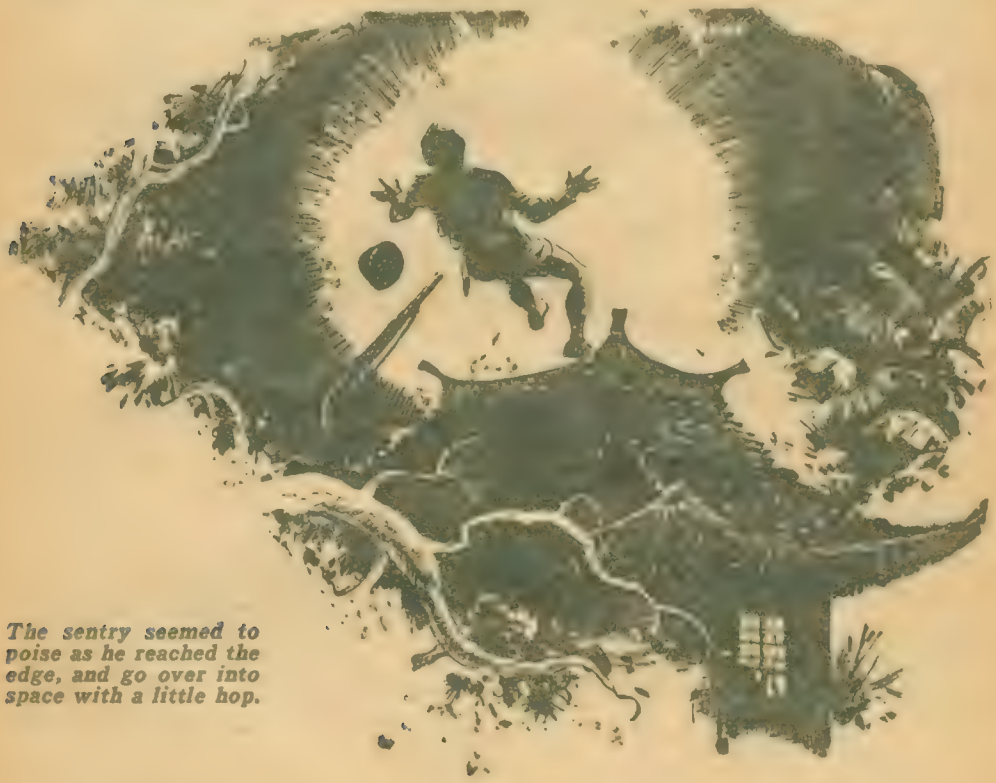
The sentry had noticed nothing. His steps slapped regularly on the strip of bare soil between the shacks and the vegetable beds of the garden. His equipment creaked, and he had an odd, nervous way of clearing his throat. At each end of his beat, he stopped for ten or fifteen seconds, then walked on. Every fourth trip, he flashed his light, looked at his prisoners.

They could not distinguish his silhouette clearly, for the trees threw dense shadow over the area. He flashed his light, paused, clicked it off, walked away. They heard his soft steps recede, ten, twelve, sixteen, twenty paces. He paused as usual. Probably looked up at the stars, mused a second. He cleared his throat. Then he could not be heard for several seconds. The two prisoners tensed, then relaxed.

Nothing had happened, for the soft steps returned, passed before them. The fourth time, the footfalls ceased, the beam swept them. They closed their eyes, pretended sleep. The man outside paced to the end of the lane. Stopped, returned.

"He's not coughing," Norbert whispered.

THE MAN passed by. Then something stirred noiselessly just outside their cage-like prison. The lightest of hisses. Flachier went to the wall on all fours.



The sentry seemed to poise as he reached the edge, and go over into space with a little hop.

"Who is it?"

"Sergeant Lofgen, *mon colonel.* We nabbed your guy, and one of ours is keeping his beat. They have a sentry on the pagoda roof, who can look down here, so we have to keep that light flashing. We picked up the three outside. How many have they got, do you know?"

"Thirty all told."

"There's no way of getting that guy on the roof. We'll have to leave him there and work quietly until we can get at their radio. The general says we mustn't bust it, but have one of our guys to substitute and answer if necessary. Doesn't want hell bombed out of this place before we can scram. Can you get loose, or are you tied?"

"Chains. We'd make a noise."

"All right, hold it. But take this in case—" Lofgen pushed an object between the slats. "I'll have that radio in fifteen minutes. Got to take it very easy, Colonel. The officers are awake and eating, drinking. The old gink gave them the provisions kept here for the general."

Lofgen left. And the sentry paused before their pen, flashed his light. Norbert stared at the roof of the pagoda, at the upturned horns at the ends, and finally spotted the guard. Yes, it would be hard to reach him undiscovered! Impossible, or Lofgen would have tried it. The man, a giant Scandinavian, six

feet some inches tall, over two hundred pounds, was the Tiger's best night raider. He had acquired as much jungle sense as a Tonkinese hunter.

"Strange how comfortable this makes me feel," Flachier said.

Lofgen had given him a forty-five caliber American automatic.

There was another long wait. Four times, the light swept the front of the shack. Then Lofgen whispered again, huddled in the darkness outside. "We got it. It was in what you'd call the vestry, I guess. Just back of the big room where they've settled down. Never heard a thing. We can hear them talking, and the girls giggling." The sergeant no doubt recalled that Madelaine was there, and added: "Sort of nervous, though, not like they liked the party much. We got a guy on the radio that can handle things. Was in their signal corps three years."

"Juan Muraka?"

"That's the guy."

"Fine. What are you going to do now?"

"I've sent word to Major Hoffner that all is ready. When he gives the signal, I get the guy on the roof and then go in. Won't take two minutes. I guess you can take a chance pulling up that pole."

Flachier and Norbert set to work, hauling up the stick around which their chains were locked. "Take it easy, Norbert—it's coming. Odd case, Muraka. Father was a Jap, migrated to Peru or Bolivia. Married a Quechua woman. Juan looks all Jap. Old man died, the boy was brought up among Indians. When he was about sixteen, he got a feeling he wanted to see his father's country. Worked his way out, somehow. Lived in Japan with some relatives he found, then in Korea. Well, they got him in the army, and he didn't like it. He tried to desert, and they caught him. I guess they were pretty tough. Later, in China, he deserted to the Chinese. . . Easy does it, Norbert. . . And he knifed three officers before leaving.

"Here we are, just hang the chain from your belt. We'll find the key inside. Well, he got in with us. Can do a lot of special services, gets eight shares and a bonus for jobs like tonight. When he has twenty thousand, he says, he'll go home and buy his mother an estate. A sweet boy, one of the nicest guys who ever stabbed three guys in their sleep."

There was a muffled detonation somewhere in the jungle. A streak of white light lifted jerkily across the stars. Then it bloomed into bluish radiance. Norbert saw Lofgen standing nearby, a long-barreled pistol in his hand.

The sentry on the roof had risen and was perched precariously on the ridge of the slanting roof, looking at the flare, too startled to call out. A short flame darted from the pistol, there was a dry report.

The Japanese fell and slid down the tiles, dragging his clattering weapon. He seemed to poise as he reached the edge, and to go over into space with a little hop. The light vanished before he struck the ground.

THERE were spurts of flame, scattered detonations, some outside, others booming inside the buildings. There was the trampling and slapping of feet across the garden, the sounds of a door smashed to splinters with guttural shouts and piercing screams. But the fighting did not last long; it was over when Norbert and his companion elbowed their way through the crowd of raiders in the hallways. Lofgen loomed up, with the keys taken from the guard-room, and removed their chains.

The main room of the pagoda was lighted by a couple of storm-lanterns and by torches held up by some of the soldiers. The place reeked of powder, of incense, of blood. Norbert looked down as he stepped over a body. A face grinned up at him—Nukai. He saw Madelaine standing with Nadia and Major Hoffner. He shook the officer's hand over his wife's shoulder.

"Thank you."

"Hello, Hoffner," Flachier greeted.

"At your orders, Colonel." Hoffner smiled broadly, came to attention, saluted.

"You found our men intact?"

"Both of them. There they are." Hoffner indicated the stone bench on

which Norbert had spent some unpleasant moments. Labbey sat with one leg thrown over the other, smoking. At his side was the Japanese colonel, wearing a colorful kimono and straw sandals. He seemed younger, less formidable, than in Western garb. He held his hands on his knees; his face was without expression.

"Thanks for the note, darling," Norbert said to his wife. "But what's this I hear about a party here?"

"Now, what could I do? They were very polite, asked us to join them for a while. Nadia, who knows all about Japanese, said that there was nothing to worry about, that we'd better humor them. The older one"—she glanced at the colonel—"speaks French and is very nice. The others would have got fresh if given a chance." She shuddered and averted her eyes as soldiers passed by, carrying away Nukai and his comrade, but cheered up almost at once. "Oh, here's Sergeant Lofgen! Sergeant Lofgen—"

"Glad to see you, Madame Norbert." The noncom paused, holding an acetylene lamp in each hand. "I got that ship model I promised you almost finished. Glad you came back, so you can take it."

He walked away, to place his lamps on a table. The hiss and sputter of the flames started, shedding a harsh, cold light.

"Ship model?" Norbert wondered.

"The first ship he sailed on, when he was only twelve. He had been on

The fighting did not last long.

CHANOD

fishing boats before, but this one went all the way to Hong Kong with canned fish and lumber. He—"

There was a loud command, the armed men stepped back to the walls. General Chanod, Lord Tiger, was making his entrance. Norbert knew him to be a man of simple tastes, with a keen sense of humor, but Chanod knew the value of a bit of theatrical display. He wore the campaign uniform of the French Foreign Legion, a gold braided kepi was set at an angle on his big round skull. His massive jaws were clamped hard as he strode forward. He halted before the altar, faced the gathering.

"*Monsieur* Labbey."

The man walked forward, shuffling, his whites were wrinkled, dingier than ever. The Tiger smiled and offered his hand.

"Forgive the means taken to bring you here. You now understand why. You are not my prisoner, and I'll help you go anywhere you wish. However, I think we should work together, for our ends and interests coincide for the present. There will be a period of months, perhaps a year, when the entire Far East will be isolated. We can find useful work to do during that time, and in preparation for the Japanese break when it starts."

"I am not a free agent, General."

"Accept my invitation to return to my quarters, with us. There you will meet someone from the north."

"From Canton?"

"Yes."

"I accept, General."

NORBERT knew that this public interview had a purpose. Perhaps to impress the men, to make them feel that they had allies, that they would never be utterly isolated, without possible retreat.

"Colonel Katana."

"I'm listening," the Japanese said, without rising. Several men started toward him, but Chanod checked them with a gesture.

"I can show courtesy to the dying," he declared, and he crossed the room to stand before the secret service chief. "Colonel, the trouble I have taken to get you here must prove that I respect you. I came very near to fearing you. My agents have fought yours for several years."

"I know," Katana admitted. He lifted one hand, gestured with the thumb. "The gadget that strikes like a snake. I know your trademark. Guessed it very early. But I did not publicize the method as I didn't want to dishearten our non-Japanese agents."

"You asked for my head. You put a price on my head," Chanod went on. "You promised my head to your government. You were always talking of my head. It was on your mind. Yet the figure you offered for it was low, insulting."

Norbert saw that this was Chanod's answer to the printed bills asking for his death, the only possible reply that would leave his prestige intact among his followers. That was why the Tiger had not dismissed the raiders. Those men would spread yarns of the interview among their comrades, which would lose nothing in the telling. Katana understood this perfectly and played the game for his side to the finish.

"I could not honor you properly." He looked up into Chanod's face and smiled. "My government has so many more important matters to attend to."

"You are less generous than your enemies. There was a Chinese merchant of Cholon—"

"Starts like a fable."

"It points a moral," Chanod promised. "And this wealthy merchant had two sons. They were not engaged in anti-Japanese activities and lived on neutral soil. To punish their father you had them assassinated. Do you know what the father offers for your head?"

"Of course. Twenty thousand pounds sterling, gold value."

"That sum will make this little expedition profitable." Chanod duplicated the affable smile on Katana's lips. "I am a business man, as you know, Colonel. Nevertheless, I shall turn back my share into the common purse. Not because I am too finicky—I believe as did the Roman Emperor, that money has no odor—but the satisfaction of taking your head when you so persistently

clamored for mine is enough reward."

"I quite understand." Katana stood up, folded his arms. "If the British Government is solvent after this war, you can also ask for two thousand pounds from their Intelligence Service. I have been in Burma and Malaya recently. And if you are still alive—for my country will clean out your robbers' nest very soon to avenge my death."

"Unfortunately, Colonel, you have kept most of your information concerning me to yourself. Your compatriots judge me as an important bandit leader, nothing more. They judge me by the number of men I command, not their worth. And not for this—" He touched his forehead. "*You* know."

"Evidently, I underrated you. For I lost today."

"And I shall not be blamed for this. You will be. For engaging yourself and many men in an isolated venture, to be stupidly massacred by a guerrilla band."

COLONEL KATANA must have realized that he was losing steadily, at every exchange, through the simple fact that he was a prisoner. He, the master trickster, had been outwitted by a man who commanded less than one-thousandth part of his resources.

"I am to die in the morning," he said without emotion. "Why talk longer?"

"When one captures a man such as you, Colonel, one does not keep him even one night. The ceremony will take place outside, in ten minutes."

"I am ready," Katana stated, almost with relief.

But Chanod was not yet ready to let him go. The points were to be driven home to the spectators, Katana's prestige, consequently that of his Empire, battered as much as possible. It was cruel, but it was useful.

"I know you are brave, that death is not a punishment for you."

"Thank you, General." Katana gave Chanod his title.

"However, you die with a regret in your heart, with an ambition unfulfilled."

"Really?"

"You have done much for Japan. But obscurely, while your school comrades won fame in the field everywhere. You have wanted to command soldiers in the field, to fight in the open after preparing for victory. Three days ago, your wish was granted, and beyond your hopes. You were to be moved up two grades, to command a division on the Mandalay-Burma front that will be opened in a few weeks."

Chanod paused, to give Katana an opportunity to reply, but the other was

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silenced for the first time—pondering.

"You see that if I know that, I know many things. So you may believe me when I tell you that you are fortunate in one way. You have seen the brilliant beginnings of this war; you will be spared seeing the inevitable collapse."

Katana laughed, without defiance, sincerely.

"Japan shall be victorious."

Norbert feared for a moment that the Lord Tiger would argue longer with the defeated man. But Chanod nodded to Katana in farewell, turned away.

A file of armed men stepped forward. One of them brought the prisoner's arms behind his back, pushed up the loose, flowery sleeves of the kimono, lashed the wrists securely. A gigantic Oriental, across whose fat belly stretched a purple sash, contrasting with his massively muscled arms and shoulders, stood by, holding a saber. The blade was forty inches long, three inches wide at the tip, perhaps an inch across the back. A superb headsman's tool.

Flachier stepped to Chanod's side, spoke for a minute.

"Your opposite number in my organization informs me that you had decided to hang him. I don't quite understand your purpose—perhaps it was to humiliate him, as among many people hanging is considered less noble a death than decapitation. However that may be—Captain Soun!"

The Chinese officer in charge of the execution saluted.

"The prisoner will be hanged. Then you will proceed according to routine. The head must be turned over to the transport-sergeant, with affidavits of identity, report of the execution. You will be given a receipt."

"At your orders, *mon général*."

Katana walked away between the guards, without looking back. Norbert saw his head bob as he descended the steps to the clearing. Flachier grumbled with satisfaction, and the young man considered him with a sort of horror. He had asked Chanod to inflict upon Katana that which had been promised him. And yet, he had been humane with the wounded parachutist.

Then it occurred to Norbert that the poor chap had been finished off, according to the order to take no prisoners. Even Flachier's kindness was sinister. It had merely prolonged the man's agony.

CHAPTER VIII

ENEMY AGENT

SEVERAL tables had been pushed together in the space before the altar, chairs brought by orderlies. The Tiger had lighted a cigar and was pacing the flagstones.

"Seems serious," Norbert opined.

"He has things on his mind," Madelaine assured him.

"Sergeant Lofgen!" Chanod called. "Clear the room of all save commissioned officers—and the ladies. Place sentries ten paces from each door. They are to shoot anyone who comes out until you change the order. *Anyone*, you understand?"

"Yes, General. Even you?"

"Yes. Select men who do not understand French well. Then return here."

Chanod sat at the head of the "conference board," with Flachier at his right. Hoffner was at his left, then his wife, Madelaine, Norbert. Labbey faced Nadia, Soun was opposite Madelaine, and the aviator faced a young, small Britisher, Dunberry. Six lieutenants occupied the other seats.

Upon a sign from Chanod, Lofgen took his post before the altar. Madelaine nudged Norbert, who looked up at the noncom and grinned. Buddha seemed about to pat the raider on the head with his gigantic golden palm.

"Katana died like a brave man," Chanod announced. "There were some questions I would have liked to ask of him, but I knew he would not answer them. The first and simplest would have been: 'Who was your agent among us?'

"We all know that Katana contrived to get printed bills into our camp. They appeared suddenly a few days ago. They had not been printed at Tien-Mafu. Major Harris, expert in such things, compared the paper and printing with available fonts and supplies. They did

not match. For instance, the Japanese text was in *kana* and we have no such alphabet here.

"To use the slang of the times, we have a Fifth Column among us. It was very small, and has been reduced considerably. Comrade Labbey, how long has Miss Chechersky been in the service of the Japanese?"

Norbert looked at Nadia. She might have expected the blow, for she smiled, and her right hand remained still on the table.

"I don't know exactly, General. But we knew she was, in Mukden, as long ago as 1931."

Nadia rose.

"That is true. But the same can be said of any *entraineuse* on the China Coast. I worked as a hostess in night clubs, on percentage. In cities under Japanese control, one has to work for them or starve. It is well-known that we had to inform the military police that we were almost useless. Is that right, Monsieur Labbey?"

"Yes. You had to give information or be deported."

"I had no choice then. But when I had a chance to escape such work, dirty and dangerous enough, why would I have kept on? I had found a man who loved me, whom I love."

Hoffner looked up at her, then bent to kiss the hand on his sleeve. He was very calm, but Norbert saw the throbbing of his temples, and the beat of the pulse, above his tunic collar.

"Why?" Chanod gestured sharply. "Because Tien-Mafu is like a rural village and you felt nostalgia for large cities. The hills are equivalent to prison for you."

"What am I accused of?"

"Of introducing the printed bills in our camp. Of communicating with the enemy through subaltern agents."

"Have you proof, General Chanod?"

"Perhaps not enough for an ordinary court of law. Sufficient to convince us. You suggested that your husband should bring you some furs from a certain village which he raided. The bale was passed through the routine inspection by Major Hoffner. Acting-Captain Dunberry—"

THE Britisher stood up. His light mustache contrasted with his tanned face. He was embarrassed, not wholly at ease in French.

"I was in charge in the Tunnel. While the men were stripping for the medical examination and showers, I attended to the officers' private prizes. The bale of furs was fastened with heavy cords, and had leaden seals. I observed, jokingly, to the major, that according to strict regulations, I should have the bale opened. He laughed, and that was all. I cannot say that he told me not to open it."

"It is your belief, Captain," the Tiger pressed, "that it was the only item in which the tracts could have been concealed?"

"Absolutely. Most of the private prizes that time consisted of bottled goods, in cases. One slat was lifted on each." Dunberry sat down and looked at his fingernails.

Major Hoffner stood up beside Nadia.

"The raid was a complete surprise," he declared. "Very little fighting. We had two wounded. I found the bale in a motor lorry abandoned on the road, when I flashed my torch into it. I ordered some men standing near to see that the stuff was put with my prizes. There was no time to—"

"Your wife had asked you for furs?"

"It was not the first time. She also asked for cologne."

"You did not think it strange that there was so little resistance?"

"Frankly, no. There were but four trucks in the convoy, instead of the score we had expected. And you know the Japanese—sometimes they fight like the devil, other times they yield easily."

"You know, Major, that what you have said confirms suspicions?"

"I suppose so, yes." Hoffner nodded. "But when you wish to confirm anything hard enough, everything confirms."

Norbert thought that this was a weak answer. Four trucks instead of twenty, a meager loot instead of valuable stuff, furs in an army lorry, swift flight by people who ordinarily fought well—the truck guards were picked men accustomed to guerrilla raids—

"Am I suspected or am I not?" Hoffner resumed, angrily.

"You have been allowed to keep your arms, Major."

"Then let me address my friends, my comrades. There are fifty ways in which those papers could have come in. Tien-Mafu is presumably cut off from the outside. But the young boys and even some of the women go out, not by the tunnels, but over the passes between the peaks. There is a regular traffic, as we all know, of small trinkets brought in from raids for food—chickens, eggs, pork—in the Chinese settlements down the valley."

Flachier answered.

"We are aware of that. But the boys and women who engage in that peddling go in bands of five or six, could not smuggle in a strange bundle without causing gossip. Their departures and returns are checked better than you imagine. It's my job, you know."

Hoffner sat down again, bared his head, placing his kepi on the table before him. He brushed his forehead with one hand. "We might as well talk frankly—"

"Alex—" Nadia protested, grasping his shoulder.

"No, let me talk, dear. I know what is at the bottom of this. Due to my rank, I have been able to obtain things for my wife, when others could not. I know those miserable furs caused jealousy and gossip. I know that I appeared like a doting, ridiculous fool, because I am twenty years older. I felt that my prestige suffered. I had the courage to act, to separate from Nadia, to send her to Singapore, knowing what we all know—that it is but the first stage of a dangerous journey. She agreed to go. If she was free on assigned duty, why didn't she protest?"

"Because she was eager to go." Chanod paused a moment. "On her own initiative. She knew that the plane was to pick up an important passenger. If important to me, important to the Japanese. And she took a gun with her. After I had made it a point to forbid it. Her intention was to force the plane down short of its destination—"

"A woman against two men?" Nadia asked.

"One man at the controls, the other aware that reckless shooting would bring a crash. It would not be the first time you shot—"

"Oh, that old story?" She smiled and shrugged. "I could not—"

"You are not on trial for that, Miss. Madame Norbert—"

"Yes, General?"

"You took a walk with your friend while your husband and his friends were talking with Labbey. What did she say, what did she do?"

"Nothing. Well, she told me that Mr. Debreuil was not as hard-to-get as he pretended. She said a rubber-planter was like a sailor, tough to fool, easy to take. You know, that he sees what a woman's after, but—"

"Yes, yes. Did she speak to anyone?"

"No—yes. She stopped a man, a native, who was carrying a bundle on a stick. She gave him some money and a note—for a telegram."

"Thank you. Miss Chechersky, for whom was that telegram?"

"For someone in Saigon, whom I asked to write me at Singapore."

"Where did the friend live?"

"Hotel Metropole."

CHANOD reached in his pocket, brought out a small piece of paper, smoothed it out, read it. "This is addressed to a tourist agency on the Rue Catinat." He checked an answer with a lift of the hand. "I know, that is the office address. You probably suspected that any man you met might betray you. But this fellow seemed like a casual passer-by; you chanced it."

"Why would I chance it?"

"Because you felt that you were suspected, when the gun was taken from you. You could have asked Debreuil or Colonel Flachier to send the message for you."

"And get an old friend mixed up in their sinister business? Have Flachier, who more than once tried to make me understand that I was not exactly disgusting to his eyes, get something to tell the major on his return? I did not even mention where I was—"

"Possibly forgetting that telegrams have the place of origin stamped on them." Chanod seemed to gather himself to strike. "The telegram was sent. It reached Saigon shortly before the closing of offices. Yet it did not remain unattended until morning. It caused an immediate telephone call. And a messenger came for it immediately. You know where it was delivered finally?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"And what have you to say?"

"Nothing."

"Colonel Flachier will do the rest."

". . . She must have loved me a little, for she did not tell you."

Norbert felt the skin of his scalp tighten. Nadia had settled back in her chair. Hoffner put his left arm around her, drew her face against his shoulder.

"In a moment, please, General," he said.

Norbert was aware that Lofgen had moved, caught Chanod's quick shake of the head. Nadia was pale, her eyes were closed. Norbert thought she had fainted. Then he felt Madelaine crowding closer against him, saw that the major's hand, behind Nadia, was gently shoving her aside. No one moved, no one spoke. He felt as in a familiar dream, when he tried to run, to escape, to find that his feet were mired in deep silt. He knew what was about to happen, could not believe it.

The muffled shot brought them all to their feet, all save Chanod and Hoffner.

"I couldn't let that happen to her," the major said. It was odd to see tears film his slanting eyes. He lifted the girl in his arms carefully, placed her on the tables, mechanically adjusting her dress. There was blood on his tunic. "I think she is dead." He pushed away Flachier's hand. "Oh no! Not you."

"She's quite dead," Soun said.

Hoffner laid his hand on Nadia's forehead, looked down at her for a while. Then he placed his automatic before Chanod, spoke in his ordinary voice. "There is something else. She must have loved me a little, for she did not tell you. Now that she is gone, it doesn't matter."

"I know," Chanod said.

"Since when?"

"I've been sure for several days. Ever since you asked permission to send her away. I knew you would not let her go for long. And as she would not have come back willingly, you must have planned to join her. There was but one way to do that."

"Right."

"Katana wished to avoid a costly minor expedition, especially on territory assigned to him. So he had arranged a palace revolution, my murder. You were to take charge afterward, intern some of our men, serve the Japs with the others. It was your right to aspire, Alexis. But you were not cut out for leadership. When she died, you were through."

"How long do you grant me?" Hoffner asked. "I would like to see her—buried decently."

Chanod picked up the automatic, removed the magazine from the stock, held out the heavy weapon by the barrel. "One cartridge left. Pick your own time."

Hoffner hesitated then reached out, took the pistol by the grip. The muzzle pointed at Chanod's chest; the major's index finger was on the trigger-guard. The eyes of the two men remained locked for two endless seconds. The major smiled sadly.

"Too late." He slid the gun into its holster, and went on in gruff affection: "You damn show-off!"

"WE MOVE in two hours." Chanod announced to his officers. He gave a few brief orders, and they dispersed. "Well, Flachier, all has gone well thus far. How long do you think it will take them to know something's wrong here?"

"Several hours, General. They're very busy with the passing troops, supply convoys, aircraft. We'll keep checking in on that radio and it will be a while before they notice it's moving about. Katana was very touchy about interference. They won't send planes without his request for several hours. Then it will be too late for them to do much. They'll have to wait until morning."

"That gives us over twenty-four hours' lead. More than enough." The Tiger turned to Madelaine. "You performed like a veteran, Madame Norbert. Nadia had picked an ordinary villager to carry her message, and if you hadn't informed Colonel Flachier, we'd have lost our best proof."

Norbert looked at his wife, and grew red. He felt like a fool, was a fool. Of the four people in the plane, he had been the only one who saw no complications to the trip, who imagined that he was bound for Singapore. At the first opportunity, he drew Madelaine aside.

"What's all this?"

"Oh, it's perfectly simple. About a week ago, Chanod asked me to keep an eye on Nadia. She was awfully fed up with Tien-Mafu, and with Hoffner, if the truth must be told. So when she asked me to hide the gun for her, I took care to bump it so Flachier—he gives me the creeps, by the way—so that he could hear it.

"Then there was a whole comedy going on. Debreuil managed to speak to Nadia without Flachier hearing, and they were trying to fix things so she could duck the return trip and stay there. I had to make a nuisance of myself, hanging on, so that she wouldn't have a chance to just 'get lost' in the jungle until after we left. Debreuil's awfully afraid of Flachier, really."

Norbert was growing more and more angry.

"Then why all the talk about what we'd do in Singapore, if you knew we wouldn't go there?"

"Well, I had to play a part."

"Not to me!" he almost shouted.

"Oh, yes," she nodded. "You hated poor Nadia so. You'd have liked her, except for me. But she knew you objected, often spoke about it. If I had told you I was friendly with her mostly because Chanod had asked me, you'd have stopped objecting. She would have noticed it and suspected something. You *are* transparent."

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"Get this ape on deck and hose him down," the little mate had ordered.

STOWAWAY

By

ALBERT RICHARD WETJEN

THE *Maid of Arran* was running zig-zag down the coast, two days out of Rio, when Mr. Armstrong, the little mate, found the boy in the forepeak. He was lying face down on a bolt of new canvas, wedged behind some paint drums, and from the mess about him he'd been pretty sick. The mate's reaction was violent and automatic. He spat a stub of cigarette from under his ragged mustache, let loose a stream of obscenity, and jerking the dazed boy to his feet slammed him viciously against the bulkhead.

"What d'you think?" he snarled. "We've enough grief looking out for raiders and subs, and now here's a damned stowaway! This ain't a flop house!" He tilted his head to stare enraged at the bosun peering through the open hatch, and he waved one skinny hand. "Get this ape on deck and hose him down," he ordered.

The bosun grunted a surprised, "Aye, aye, sir," and swung below to get the boy, while the mate went vindictively about his business, vaguely resembling the red-eyed, lean rats that skittered at

his feet. If it wasn't one thing it was another on the *Maid of Arran,* damn her to hell! He jerked a bottle from his hip and took a good swig. Yes, damn her, he thought, as he banged the cork back. The big, rusty, vermin-infested tramp, signing crews no other vessel would consider, was fully qualified to break a first mate's heart. Except, considered Mr. Armstrong bitterly, he'd no heart left to break. It had been cracked and calloused long ago, in the greenness of his youth, and shriveled and clinkered later—when disillusionment and the iron sea had stripped his manhood.

And now these blasted stowaways! Fool kids trying to be smart—stars in their eyes — adventure — romance — it made him sick! Now he had double look-outs to figure on, and an empty feeling in his guts when he thought of the last war, and the tin fishes smacking home. Hell!

He went muttering on deck at last and snarled, "Where is he?" and the bosun jerked a thumb. The little mate wormed a profane way through a circle of hard-faced, grinning seamen, and standing with spread feet he sourly surveyed his find.

"Name?" he demanded testily. "Name, boy!" The boy stared up at him. He was propped in the scuppers, still gasping from the shock of the hose, his shaking fingers trying to button a sodden jacket about him. He had some trouble speaking.

"Benton, sir," he managed at last. "Robert Benton."

Mr. Armstrong lighted a cigarette and scowled. He'd be hearing about this from Captain Salter. The old man didn't like stowaways, not even kids who might be considered harmless. He judged the boy around sixteen, maybe seventeen, with no meat on him yet. Pretty good that. Defiance from a blast-now. Mouth wide and firm—or would be if it wasn't quivery trying to cover chattering teeth. Sick blue eyes that looked back with a hint of defiance. Pretty good that. Defiance from a blasted stowaway! The mate shifted his cigarette across his thin mouth and spat, half down his chin.

"Benton?" he repeated. "And from where, me son?"

The boy clenched a fist and rubbed his nose with a curious gesture. "The *Paladin,* sir. I jumped her in Rio. I . . . wanted to show 'em."

"So you wanted to show 'em," said Mr. Armstrong sarcastically. He snatched out his cigarette and coughed, a hacking, dry cough that left a smear of red on the back of his shaky hand. "The *Paladin,*" he gasped finally, recovering himself. "That floating hotel? Thirty thousand tons and twenty-five knots. You wouldn't be lying, boy?"

"I don't lie," said the boy steadily. "I was on the *Paladin,* sir. Junior cadet."

"Which is fancy name for apprentice," the mate sneered. "What d'you think I am?" He coughed hard again. "An' why," he demanded skeptically, "would you be quitting a fancy packet to get on a crate like this?"

The boy held his jacket closed and stilled his chattering teeth. "I wanted to show 'em, sir," he explained. "The other cadets thought I was getting the breaks. They acted funny, thinking I was favorite. I wasn't, sir. The cadet officer had orders to work me extra hard, but no one would believe it. They kept ribbing me so I couldn't stand it any more and I thought I'd show 'em I could get my own ticket—get to be an officer—without help. You see, sir?"

The boy looked slowly around the circle of still grinning seamen and he swallowed. "No, you wouldn't understand," he muttered. The mate jerked him upright and thrust him back against the rail. "Talk sense, boy! We're in a war," he said roughly. "Why'd you be a favorite cadet?"

The boy shook himself free and a touch of red came to his face. "You listen!" he said angrily. "My father's master of the *Paladin.* We're on convoy!"

There was a curious silence then. The *Maid of Arran* slapped spray over her foc'sle-head and they could hear it rattle on the hatches. The keen wind sang in the rigging and the sea made a low, roaring noise as the big tramp drove into it. The mate stared at the boy's face.

"So your father's master of the *Pala-*

din?" he repeated, very quietly. "Then you'll be Harry Benton's kid?" The boy compressed his lips and nodded, rubbing his nose again with his fist. There was no use saying anything more. Two or three of the crew laughed and Mr. Armstrong shook his head, puzzled.

"Yet it could be," he muttered. "Aye, it could be. You've Harry's eyes—and that trick of rubbing his nose—and the damn nerve of him that stared down clipper masters in their time."

"You've met my father?" asked the boy curiously and the mate jerked out his cigarette to cough again. "How should I know," he said harshly. "I've met a lot of skippers." He turned to the bosun and jerked a thumb. "Put him to work. We'll have no loafers aboard here!"

He pushed through the silent crew and went scowling midships, a middle-aged, twisted little man, sour and tired, his nerves on edge from more than liquor now. The bosun stared after him and spat.

"The rattiest tramp ship mate that ever cut his mother's throat," he said dispassionately. "You're lucky, kid, he didn't kick your teeth in just to work off his hangover. And why you had to pick this ship out of all them in the harbor beats me. . . Never mind—but you were halfway safe on a crack like the *Paladin*. On a crate like this we're juice for any sub that happens along! Well, you picked us!"

CAPTAIN SALTER chewed on his cigar and surveyed his first mate with malicious eyes as he came on the bridge, and he was sarcastic. "You and the boys been holding a church meeting for'ard?" he asked. "I noticed quite a huddle."

"Just some more grief," said the mate sourly. He flipped his cigarette over the rail and wiped his mouth. "Stowaway. What else did you think?"

"The same," said Captain Salter candidly. He smacked thick lips and waved his hand. "But I'd like the details." He was a big, red-faced, bull-necked man with a coarse arrogance to him that jarred most people, but could also, when he exerted himself, give forth a certain hearty charm. He slapped the mate on the back with a force that staggered him and then his voice hardened. "All right. Spill it!"

"Found a kid named Benton," explained the mate, swearing. "Took a jump off the *Paladin*, or so he says." He coughed a moment and clawed at the captain's arm. "And listen, Bill—his old man's the *Paladin's* skipper!"

Captain Salter's hand checked his cigar halfway to his mouth and for a moment he was motionless. Then his face took on a mottled hue and a vein appeared down his forehead and began to jump.

"You wouldn't be telling me, you drunken slob, we've Harry Benton's kid aboard, would you?"

Mr. Armstrong lighted a cigarette and rolled it across his mouth with a nervous tongue. "Look," he said jumpily. "It's straight, Bill. The kid says it—and I think so. Looks like Harry looked when we was all kids together on the *Forest Dream*. Got his eyes. That trick of rubbing his nose. Got Harry's jaw when he sticks it out. It ain't snake stuff, Bill. We got Harry Benton's kid aboard, all right." He gave further details, waving his skinny hands.

Captain Salter drew in a deep breath and after a while he smiled, a slow, twisted smile that was not humorous. His eyes were hard as agates in their hollows of fat, and he put thick fingers out to grip his mate's arm.

"You wouldn't fool me, would you?" he purred. "No, I know you wouldn't. I'd tear the face off you if I thought so. So we've Harry Benton's kid, and you know what I want of Harry Benton. Nothing less than his guts."

"An' where d'you think I stand?" spat the little mate. He twisted his arm free and sucked hard at his cigarette. "What you got against Benton I ain't got? High an' mighty, ain't he now? Master of the *Paladin*, and us all together on the *Forest Dream* thirty years ago. Starting even. . ."

"You needn't give me the story," said the captain savagely. "I should forget, eh? Thirty years ago and the three of us apprentices. A good ship and a good Line, and Benton stuck on a high horse

even then. A reading boy. Officer's man. Turning me in. . . No, I haven't forgotten."

Mr. Armstrong gave a quick grin. "Hell, Bill, that time he turned you in he was in charge and you'd no business quitting an anchor watch to chase that girl ashore. What the hell—" The captain's hand took him hard across the mouth and brought blood, sending the little mate into another coughing spell.

"Keep your trap shut," the captain grated, "and tend your bottle, damn you! You were always best at that. And I'm not thinking so much about that anchor watch stuff. I'm thinking when I was in line for the *Euripides*. Benton cut me out there, when I had it cinched." Captain Salter's face was convulsed with a raging, unleashed fury, and he kept slamming his fist on the bridge rail. He was almost shouting. "Aye, I had it cinched. That command. But someone told a lot of lies about me grafting on ship's stores, so I was kicked out. And Benton got the *Euripides*. He's had a lot of fine ships since — the stuck-up swine! Wouldn't even shake hands last time I met him in the Captain's Club. But now I've got his kid. That's nice, mister." His voice dropped again. "Very nice."

The little mate gave a final cough, gasped and found his voice. "What's so nice?" he panted. "There ain't no way to get at Harry through the kid."

"That's what you think," said the captain softly. "You say the boy wants to be a sailor on his own. We'll help him, mister. We'll send him back to his daddy so his daddy won't know him. We'll make him a sailor all right, the sort they won't take on crack packets any more."

The captain's fingers bit into nis arm again making him wince. "I want no interference, mister. You understand that. The kid's my meat."

"Why should I give a damn?" said the mate and the captain nodded.

"Sure," he said. "Why should you give a damn? Harry Benton never did a thing for you. And we're all liable to get a tin fish any minute. It's maybe a good idea to pay off old grudges while you can!"

MR. ARMSTRONG went below after a while, and dropped to the dingy settee in his room, automatically reaching for the bottle on his hip. The old man was right, he thought sourly. What did he care? Why should he stick his nose into something strictly between Benton and Bill Salter? Even if he'd a mind to, which he hadn't. He took a long drink and felt better. He didn't want to run afoul of Salter anyway. The big man was too handy with his fists, and with the sarcastic tongue of him. Talking to him like that on the bridge, and hitting him, and with the helmsman seeing and hearing it all. And why not, when it was just little Jimmy Armstrong he was kicking around? Drunken Jimmy Armstrong, first mate of the lousy tramp ship *Maid of Arran*, now running the blockade. He took another drink and brooded.

If only he'd had the right breaks maybe he'd have been a skipper by now. If he'd been big and husky he might have a mate he could kick around, too. But he'd never had the breaks and he wasn't big and husky. So the hell with it! He'd had to make the best of things.

Salter was an ugly swine though. The big man had beaten him up when he felt like it, left him holding the sack when things went wrong, and always threatened him or shouted him down when he protested or argued. He wondered darkly why he hadn't pushed Salter over the rail some night long ago. He took another drink and considered. Sure, why not? It would have been easy. Still was. He chuckled to himself. You never could tell what might come up.

Salter had always run him, dominated him since they'd been boys together on the *Forest Dream* all those years ago—the *Forest Dream*, full-rigged ship out of New York for Sydney, and Jimmy Armstrong and Bill Salter and Harry Benton in the half-deck of her, 'prentices learning the trade. He could still remember how it had been. Harry Benton, big, quiet, studious and kindly, trying to help them. And Bill Salter, just as big, hearty and friendly on the surface,

but smooth, shrewd and calculating underneath, always looking for the main chance. And himself, little Jimmy Armstrong, the smallest and the timidest of the three trying to make the best of it—trying to get through. Fascinated on the one hand by Salter with his easy laugh and wide gestures that promised all the world was waiting for a smart man. And yet restrained a little by Harry Benton's calmness, and his smile, and his earnest, "Why'nt you stay aboard, Armstrong, and read up a little?" when Salter would be on the wharf impatiently calling him. . . Come ashore, sailor. To hell with reading and the navigation books. There's music and girls. . . It seemed Salter always won.

The mate lighted a cigarette sourly, without relish. So they had Harry Benton's kid now, eh? . . . How could he forget that night on the main-royal yard, with the *Forest Dream* staggering in the thrust of a sudden *pampero*? The foot-rope oily and uncertain, the blinding smother—and little Jimmy Armstrong slipping and starting to slide over the yard. Harry Benton had caught him then, just in time, and he'd swung there, between the sky and the iron dock waiting far below. He never knew just how long Benton had held him before one of the sailors came up, but it must have been an eon or so. Benton's arm had never been quite right after that. Something to do with strained muscles and tendons. It had swollen up and given Benton pain for weeks, and it was always a bit bent and stiff afterwards, though not enough to set him ashore.

Benton had smiled the whole thing off in his easy, patient way, but Jimmy Armstrong hadn't forgotten. Not quite, though he'd wanted to often enough. It burned him up to think how Benton had gone ahead. A big noise now. No time for tramp ship mates. Sniffing up his sleeve because he'd had the breaks and got the right ships. Damn him! He guessed he hated his guts all right. Just like Salter. He drank again and cursed. There wasn't any kick to the liquor it seemed. He kept remembering things. Like when Salter had been kicked off the *Forest Dream* and had blarneyed little Jimmy into going with him, filling him with wild talk of the Islands, and the swift-winged tramps where they didn't work you and discipline you to death and you really got to see the world. A fine exchange it seemed now! Quitting a good Line and a sure career to swim in the dregs of the waterfronts. Just another lousy break and a mistake any kid might make. No wonder a man had to have his liquor. The mate spat and brooded on.

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DIME DETECTIVE MAGAZINE

at first, as all Salter's schemes seemed, and when it finally came to Jimmy Armstrong that it was a folly, it was too late. He was case-hardened, a byword to the shipping, and his reputation was almost as unsavory as Salter's. There'd been one break though, as he had to admit, when they ran across Benton in New York and they were flat on the beach, with warrants running for them over half the Pacific for a particularly unsavory smuggling deal. Benton was still the friendly and ever helpful shipmate, talking the port captain into giving them berths on the *Euripides,* one of the lesser ships of the Line. It wasn't much of a berth, but it was a start back, and in the old firm. Benton had introduced them around, lent them money for their outfits and then gone away first mate of a big new freighter. But stuck up quite a bit, sure of himself. Mr. Armstrong drank resentfully. You could afford to be stuck up when you got the breaks. Anyone could.

Still, things might have worked out if Bill Salter hadn't started his old tricks. Started the old intrigues, the fake heartiness, the worming in with agents and officials with inside stories about the men, and the ship; stool-pigeon stuff, smooth as silk. He got himself first mate's berth in a surprising short time, and then he had his eye on command. The old captain was retiring and Salter thought he had a good in.

Sure, little Jimmy Armstrong snarled to himself. He spat his stub of cigarette across the cabin. Salter *always* had a good in. He'd even had command of the *Euripides* fixed, or so he thought, but that was one time he'd slipped. Mr. Armstrong chuckled. How he'd slipped! For Harry Benton was in line for the *Euripides* too, and then a row broke in the home office over suspicious shortage of stores that had been paid for and not delivered. Big graft. Plain as the nose on your face, once the thing was dragged into the open. It was a tangled matter, where any of a dozen men might have been guilty, and it was Salter who wrote the anonymous letter that Benton was guilty. Mr. Armstrong knew. And then someone told the truth and the business blew up in Salter's own face, so it was Salter who was fired and Benton who got the ship. The *Euripides.* The crack new freighter of the Line. Mr. Armstrong was racked with coughing as he tried to laugh again.

It was all very funny, now he came to think of it. Well, he'd followed Salter like a weak magnet follows a stronger one, reluctantly but without recourse. And where had it finally landed the both of them, with all Salter's big talk? Nowhere but on the *Maid of Arran,* cheap-owned and cheap-run. The funny part was Bill Salter still had a grudge against Harry Benton for getting the *Euripides* away from him. What a laugh! Blaming Harry Benton. Mr. Armstrong took a final drink as he staggered chuckling to his bunk and fell in. He considered his empty bottle for a while and then flung it across the cabin. Hell, he thought drowsily. I'm no good any more. Got to forget the *Forest Dream* and all that stuff. Let the kid look after himself. That's what he wants anyway. . . He drifted muttering to sleep. He slept dressed. You couldn't tell about torpedoes.

THE second mate was pessimistic when a bleary-eyed Mr. Armstrong relieved him later. "Radio reports quite a gale to the south. Dirty stuff. We'll catch the tail-end by dark. And there's another raider loose."

"Likely enough," agreed the mate. He lighted a cigarette and spat with an effort, feeling bad. Shouldn't have drunk so much before turning in. He rubbed his red-rimmed eyes and squinted at the sickly disk of the sun. "You got everything secured?" he asked moodily.

"Had the men working right along," the second stated. "And say, what's got into the old man? He had that stowaway up and signed him this afternoon. Never knew him so bloody pleasant. Talked like a Dutch uncle and gave the kid a drink."

"That's no way," the mate considered. "What sort of a drink?"

"Whiskey," the second observed. "I figured it pretty queer myself. The kid's no age to hit that stuff, but the old man said something about him being sick

and it would make him feel better."

Mr. Armstrong smoked in silence and scowled at the rising sea. Salter hadn't wasted much time, working on the boy already. He shrugged and went in the chartroom for a look at the glass, and then went round the ship to check up. Might be a good night to give Salter that extra push over the rail. If he had the nerve. But he hadn't, so what was the use of thinking about it.

They caught the tail-end of the gale soon after dark, the combers roaring white and high under a watery moon, and the wind smashing sprays across the reeling decks. The *Maid of Arran*, not a good sea boat at the best of times, and heavy laden as she was, took her punishment.

"I'll have to ease here," exploded Captain Salter at last, shouting above the wind. "And I wanted to make time this run."

"You'll be making time to the bottom," said Mr. Armstrong, surveying the streaming decks. "You'd better heave her to."

"I don't need any of your advice," the captain swore, but he reached for the telegraph just the same and signaled the helmsman. The ship came round slowly during a lull, was almost clear, and then a cross-sea smothered her. She went down on her beam ends, hung there a while, and when she finally lifted, the livid water cascading off her, she had lost a length of rail, the bridge woodwork had been badly stripped, and a heavy lifeboat had come adrift from its gripes and was slithering about on the boat deck. Mr. Armstrong's whistle cut above the wind, and for'ard the bosun got the men out. The little mate clawed profanely through the smother and directed things, pausing in the lee of the funnel for a quick drink.

The bosun already had the men at work passing wet lines and securing the boat, when the *Maid of Arran* took one last stomach-sickening lunge as she came round to face the sea. It jarred Mr. Armstrong from his grip on the funnel stay and his feet shot from under him. He slicked fast towards the side and then someone caught at his oilskins, diverting him enough so he ran hard into a davit. He climbed swearing to his feet and stared round.

"I—I thought you'd gone, sir," said young Benton shakily. His face was ashen in the moonlight and Mr. Armstrong saw blood was trickling from a cut on his forehead. The mate had been jarred sober for a moment and a glance at the angry sea overside made him shudder. He wiped his wet face and swallowed, and was filled with unreasoning fury.

"What the hell you doing up here?" he snarled. "Getting in the men's way!"

"I'm working with the watch, sir," the boy faltered. "That's what you said. . ."

"Well, I'm saying now you get below," the little mate shouted. "Report to the cook in the morning. You can maybe peel spuds."

"I'd rather work with the watch," the boy protested and Mr. Armstrong let loose a stream of obscenity that started him coughing. "Get out!" he choked when he was able. "You damned Bentons. This is no place for a fancy liner cadet."

He pushed the boy away, saw him stumble down to the main deck, and then ducked behind the funnel for a long drink. Blasted stowaways! Nothing but a lot of grief, anyway. He took another drink before he went back on the bridge and he felt better.

Captain Salter was surprised when he saw the boy next morning. The big red-faced master was making the rounds with the mate to see what the storm damage was, and they came upon young Benton peeling potatoes outside the galley door. "Well, well," said the captain heartily. "And what's all this?"

"Mate's orders, sir," said the boy sullenly and the captain twisted to look at Mr. Armstrong. The mate shrugged. "All he's good for," he said sourly. "Getting in the men's way last night. Might have been washed overside. He's in no shape to be with the watches." He had a vaguely guilty feeling talking like that.

Captain Salter patted the boy's shoulder. "That's not your idea, is it?" he asked genially. "You're a husky youngster and you want to be a sailor. We've got a war on our hands too. Your daddy

. . . Salter would go too far some day, damn him!

was never a quitter, I can tell you."

"Nor me!" exploded Benton hotly. "I didn't jump the *Paladin* for this." He waved his peeling knife. "Sure, I want to be a sailor, sir! But it's the mate's orders."

Captain Salter smacked his lips and teetered back and forth. "Ah, yes," he agreed sympathetically. "Mr. Armstrong is too hasty. You can report back to the watch, boy."

The mate lighted a cigarette and puffed angrily as they moved away. You could trust Bill Salter to show you up before a kid. He winced as the captain's fingers bit into his arm.

"You keep your nose out," the captain was purring. "I aim to educate him properly. You just stick to your bottle and quit having funny ideas."

"I've got no ideas," the little mate snarled. "Lay off me, Bill. I tell you the kid was in the way last night and I just blew up."

The captain nodded and stared with narrowed eyes. "Well, don't blow up any more. He's not going to learn much in the galley."

"I should worry," the mate growled. "Stick him in the saloon if you feel like it."

"The foc'sle's better," the captain chuckled. "You can learn a lot of things in the foc'sle." And they dropped the subject.

MR. ARMSTRONG avoided the Benton boy like a plague after that. He wanted no part of him, wanted nothing to do with Salter's plans, and preferred to forget the whole thing. He had his own troubles anyway, what with the ship and the crew, and it was easier to get a few drinks under his belt and brood over personal problems than to worry about a fool kid.

Still, he had odd, unbidden moments when he felt uneasy. He knew the boy was getting his fill of a tramp ship's foc'sle, all the dirt and roughness of it, and he suspected Salter had dropped a few hints to some of the men. They'd think it pretty amusing to initiate a decently raised kid, and a despised liner kid at that. Which didn't worry the little mate much, until he would unwillingly remember the old days on the *Forest Dream*, and that night when Harry Benton had held him on the yard. Maybe he owed something to the younger Benton too, for grabbing him on the boat deck. Sometimes it took half a bottle to deaden such nonsense. Mostly he just didn't care, or he didn't anyway until the *Maid of Arran* came to Port Yadda and several things worked to a climax.

"The crowd's all set for a spree," observed the second mate as they docked. "They'll be ugly tomorrow."

Mr. Armstrong shrugged. "They got to blow off steam," he said indifferently. "A little liquor and fighting won't hurt. We'll handle 'em."

They always had, hadn't they, he thought sourly, even if it took brass-knuckles and sea-boots to get the foc'sle in order again. He stood moodily on the lower bridge as the men filed by Captain Salter for a wage advance. Port Yadda was wide-open and the women and liquor were always waiting. The little mate drew hard on his cigarette, surprised as he saw young Benton behind the men, and he started to wave him for'ard.

"You've nothing coming," he said shortly. "Just run along." But Captain Salter checked him. "I sent for Benton, mister, it's all right." He beamed at the boy. "You'll be wanting to see the port yourself, son," he observed. "As a real

sailor should. There's some high spots and wide spots, and I spoke to some of the men to take you around. I knew your daddy, remember, so I'm giving you ten dollars so you can stand your whack."

Mr. Armstrong spat out his cigarette and swore. Young Benton had nothing coming. He was a stowaway, working ship for a dollar a month. But you could trust Bill Salter to figure a way round that, all right. . . The old soft stuff. I knew your daddy, remember. . . It irritated the little mate and he ducked round the bridge house for a quick drink while Harry Benton's son went laughing ashore with the men.

"Port Yadda's tough for a boy," observed the mate when he returned.

The captain laughed and bit the end from a cigar. "Sure, sure," he agreed heartily. "It's tough for a boy. But he won't be such a boy, come morning. He wants to learn, don't he? He wants to be a sailor. Or are you getting funny ideas again?"

"I never had any," snarled the mate. "But I never saw you throw ten dollars away before. Maybe it's the shock got me."

The captain chuckled. "Best ten bucks I ever spent," he stated. Then his face hardened and he took the other by the throat and shook him. "The boys'll be going to Heinie's place for the fun," he grated. "Maybe you don't know it but the *Paladin's* in port—and I wouldn't want to lose little Bobby Benton. Would I now? So I'll be going to Heinie's myself to make sure things are right." He shook the half-strangled mate again, and then with an oath slammed him against the bulkhead and watched him slide panting and impotent down to the deck.

"You stay aboard and watch ship, mister," he said harshly. "You and the damned bottle. And if you need an idea what I want Harry Benton to see when he gets his son back, just take a look in the glass. You're practically perfect."

The little mate hardly heard him, being doubled up coughing and clawing at his bruised throat, and Captain Salter laughed loudly as he went in his cabin to dress.

MR. ARMSTRONG got to his feet after a while, shaking with weakness and fury. He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and automatically groped for his bottle. Salter would go too far some day, damn him! Much too far. So far even drunken Jimmy Armstrong would get the nerve to finish him. He could hear the captain humming cheerfully to himself as he dressed, and he stumbled cursing to the main deck and his own room. He had to lie down for a while. That last fit of coughing seemed to have torn him apart inside. He fell into his bunk, panting with the effort, and stared hot-eyed at the dark deckhead.

He was all washed-up all right. No good any more. No good even to himself. But he'd give a lot to get one good crack at Salter before he was through. His scrawny body shook with hatred, and his lips moved soundlessly as he cursed. All his sea-life he'd put up with Salter and it was too late to make any change now. A sailor was lost ashore, and anyway who'd give a job to a little man whose lungs were shot.

So the *Paladin* was in Port Yadda too, an auxiliary cruiser now, according to reports, and according to Salter. He wondered what would happen if he sent word to Harry Benton about his kid. Harry wasn't afraid of Bill Salter. Never had been. He might come down and tear his face off. He was big enough. But he was a liner man now and probably soft, and anyway he couldn't afford a waterfront brawl. No, that was out. But there must be some way, something that would rip Salter's guts out. Maybe the kid was an angle. He had his lousy heart set on breaking the kid, and it'd be a laugh to mess up that business. Not that he gave a damn about the kid. He didn't give a dam about anything any more.

He started to sit up as something occurred to him, but the very idea made his stomach crawl and he wilted back again. Salter would break him wide open if he really stuck his nose into the affair. The big captain had promised that much and he'd keep the promise. Still, it was pleasant to think about it for

a while. After all, it was pretty lousy sending the kid down to Heinie's with the men. They'd probably put Flo on him. Flo didn't care much what she did so long as she got paid, and she'd get a kick out of dirtying up a kid. Making him look like Jimmy Armstrong. Salter's words gnawed into the mate so he swung out of the bunk with a sudden curse, switched on the light and stared at himself in the glass.

No, he wasn't a pretty sight. Maybe once he'd been smooth-faced and fresh, like young Benton. But you'd hardly guess it now. He ran shaky fingers over his furrowed cheeks and lined forehead, and he shivered a little. In a way Salter had done all that to him, dragged him along, broken him at last. He muttered under his breath and drank quickly. If he got enough inside him he'd stop thinking like a fool. What did he care?

Maybe he still owed Harry Benton something for that night on the *Forest Dream* over thirty years ago. Maybe he even owed Benton's kid something for grabbing at him on the boat deck scarce a month back. But why should he stick his neck out? He'd never had the breaks, and sticking your neck out was certainly no way to get them. He tried to shake off his depressed feeling and went out on deck.

It was dark now and he prowled about the ship a while to see things were all right, finding fault with the watchman and quarreling briefly with the second engineer, which made him feel better. But the thought kept itching back in his mind that it'd be a fine crack at Salter to get young Benton away from him. He chuckled to think how Salter would look and talk if that happened. The dirty swine might even have a stroke and oblige everyone by dropping dead. If it could only be worked. Mr. Armstrong stood at the gangway-head staring at the dock while he considered. He was pretty drunk by now and his blood seemed on fire. Why shouldn't he try it, take a chance? Anything to get even for once. Sudden decision took him and he stumbled down the gangway and along the dock at last, like a man in a dream, without volition. He checked himself once, filled with sudden panic. He must be mad to think of trying anything. Bill Salter would murder him. But that thought passed. He reached for his hip and drank some more and finally went on, swearing steadily to himself to keep up his courage.

THE smoke was thick in Heinie's place, and there was a smell of stale liquor and sweat. The tables were crowded, and the sailors, most of them in uniform now, were already half-drunk, some shouting, some laughing, some singing. The tinny piano was almost drowned in the thick noise, and the girls moved shrewd-eyed about in bright dresses that reeked of cheap perfume, watching for a beckoning hand. Mr. Armstrong steadied himself at the bar and talked to Heinie.

"Sure, the old man was in a while ago. And the kid's in the back room," said Heinie. He stared at the little mate with some curiosity. "What's eating you, Jimmy?"

"Too much," the mate grunted. "Anyone with the kid?"

"Oh, two or three of your crowd and some girls. I guess Flo's looking after the kid."

"That'd be Salter's idea?" asked the mate and Heinie shrugged.

"Sure, he hired her. It's none of my business, Jimmy, though I'd say the kid's pretty damned green to be acting up."

"Too green," snarled the mate. "Listen, Heinie. I've done you a favor or so in the smuggling end. This time it'll be one on you."

Heinie looked at him a long time and chewed on a black cigar. He was a short stout man in soiled white ducks, and his round, red face looked almost cherubic, quite as if he didn't run the worst dive in Port Yadda. "Anything you want, Jimmy," he said at last. "I ain't forgetting what I owe."

"Let's go see the kid," said the mate abruptly.

Heinie led the way. Three or four of the *Maid of Arran's* crew, beside young Benton, were sitting in the back room. They had girls on their knees and they

looked around surprised as the mate snapped, "Beat it, you!"

One of the men slid his girl away and stood up lurching. "What the hell!"

"I said beat it!" snarled the little mate through his teeth.

The man looked at his convulsed face and tensed body and moved uneasily. "All right, sir, all right," he mumbled. The men and girls got out hurriedly. All save young Benton and Flo.

Flo had an arm round the boy's neck and his flushed face was smeared with lipstick. He was quite drunk and laughing to himself, and Mr. Armstrong said to the girl, "You get out too!"

She stared back at him and twisted her mouth. "Since when did you crawl ashore?" she sneered.

"Get out!" said Heinie evenly.

"O.K., if you say so," she shrugged. "But Salter's not going to like it." She started up and young Benton clawed at her. "Hey, you're not going, Flo. We gotta lot to talk about. Got lotsa things t' do." He stared at Mr. Armstrong then, focusing his eyes, and giggled. "So it's you, huh?" He hiccoughed. "The rattiest little tramp ship mate that ever cut his mother's throat. That's what the bosun says. No one pays attention to him, Flo. Look, I'm telling you. The skipper said it too. Sit down, see."

Heinie jerked his head and Flo swore and left resentfully. The little mate's face was gray and he felt sick to his stomach. So even a damned stowaway had him figured. With a start like that the boy wouldn't be long getting where little Jimmy Armstrong was now. He touched Heinie's arm.

"Fix a mickey finn," he said hoarsely. "Then I'll tell you what I want."

Heinie was back almost at once and handed the boy the drugged liquor. He drank it without question, still giggling to himself, and the two men watched hard-eyed as he choked a little and then slumped. He would be out for hours.

"All right, let's have it," said Heinie shortly, and the little mate talked at length. Heinie shook his head when he had done. "Salter ain't going to like it," he said, "but I'll do it since you ask."

"I don't want Salter to like it," the mate snarled. "What in hell else do you think I'm doing it for?"

"How would I know? Maybe you're going soft. But O.K. You want I should keep the kid under cover until you sail tomorrow. Then deliver him to Harry Benton on the *Paladin*."

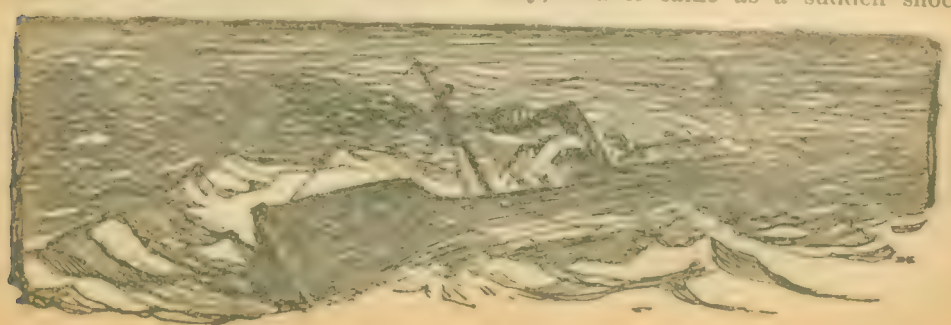
"You got it, Heinie. Just hand him right to his daddy and tell him to hang onto him this time."

Heinie chewed on his cigar and frowned a little. "For a pal, it's done," he said. "But I'm sticking my neck out plenty. Where do I get off when the questions start?"

The mate took a long drink from his hip bottle and considered. His nerves steadied and he began to feel pleased. "Just tell him it's from a kid he held up on the royal yard of the *Forest Dream* more'n thirty years ago. Hell," he spat, "he'll understand."

"O.K.," said Heinie. "I'll take the kid to the cellar where I keep the odds and ends. Salter won't know. But you'd better watch yourself, fella. He said he'd be back later to see things were right."

"I'll watch," grinned the little mate. "I figure on having me a laugh." He sat down after Heinie had gone, and drank. All washed-up, was he? He kept chuckling to himself, his thoughts all rosy, and it came as a sudden shock



when a hand took him by the shoulder.

"So you did get ideas!" choked Captain Salter. The big man's face was mottled with rage and he shook the little mate viciously. "Flo tells me there's some funny business. Where's Benton, damn you!"

Mr. Armstrong laughed, started to cough, then laughed again. "Back with his daddy, Bill," he gasped. "Where you can't get him. I sort of owed the kid a break. That's one time I paid off . . . Don't—" The captain's fist smashed into his face and he went to the floor. He stumbled up, spitting blood and coughing and the captain hit him again.

"I said I'd take you apart," the big man grated. "Now you get it."

Mr. Armstrong covered his face and body as best he could and doubled over. He had no thought of fighting back. He seldom had had against Salter. He hardly felt the blows after a while, and for some reason he kept laughing. When he went down for the last time, it was Heinie who pushed Salter back and lifted the little mate's head.

"Lay off," said Heinie shortly. "You've about finished him, Salter."

"I'll make a good job of it then," the captain snarled. "That drunken rat's putting nothing over on me."

"That's what you think," whispered the mate. He wasn't laughing now and his face was ashen beneath the blood-smears, but he looked curiously younger and peaceful. "That's what you think, Bill. I'm all washed up all right. The finish I guess. But I want to tell you, Bill . . . I put it over you twice . . . You blaming Harry Benton over that *Euripides* business. I could bust me sides! Sure he got your ship. They found out who was really grafting on the stores, didn't they? And it was little Jimmy Armstrong who spilled his guts, not Harry. I owed Harry too much to see him taken. Remember that night on the *Forest Dream*? . . . Laugh that off, Bill. And Heinie'll see you swing for this. So little Jimmy Armstrong's all paid up . . . All paid . . ." He coughed for a long time before Heinie laid his head down.

"Ye'll be paying it back, laddie, when you're over your spree."

ILLUSTRATED BY PETE KUHLHOFF

HARD MONEY

By

ROBERT ORMOND CASE

IT WAS one of those blistering, soul-killing fall days on the Elder-McIlroy claim. Crickets buzzed along the rimrock and a lone buzzard swung like a pendulum over the painted desert. Dust pillars stood motionless out there, supporting the brazen sky. The whole world baked.

Along in the middle of the forenoon Bill Elder thrust his shovel deep into the gravel bank. He did it like he was killing snakes; and he left it there, straightening up. Joel McIlroy straightened up with him and looked at the shovel and at Bill. Joel knew what it meant, he and Bill having been partners for nineteen years.

Joel didn't argue about it: he just sighed and wiped the sweat from his

shaggy eyebrows. "I've only got seven dollars," he said.

"Up in the tobacco can on the shelf?" asked Bill, tightening his belt.

"Yes," said Joel. "And ye'll be paying it back, laddie, when you're over your spree."

Bill tried to make him understand. He never did, but he always tried. "It isn't that I've got a yen to get filthy drunk, old son. It's just that a man gets to thinking. We work on this chin-whisker claim, month in and month out—"

"The clean-up averages three dollars a day," said Joel.

"Which is just two jumps and a squat ahead of starvation," said Bill. "Any way you look at it, it's hard money."

"There's none easy," said Joel. "That you'll never learn . . . The shovel will be waiting there when you get back."

So Bill went down to the cabin and took the seven dollars out of the can and went on down to Canyon City. It was afternoon when he got there and he was hungry and thirsty, but when he went by a store window and saw how shaggy he was he turned into a barber shop and said: "Hack 'er off."

While the barber was clipping his hair a string of sleek horses went by. Bill asked how come and the barber told him there was horse-racing out at the fair grounds. All the blooded sports would be there. "That's me," said Bill. "I can take on a load of victuals and vice when I get back."

HE went to the fair grounds and in the first line-up a strawberry roan took his eye. This roan was lean as a snake and had a Roman nose, just like old Joel McIlroy. It was a hunch, so he bet five dollars on the nose and the roan came in, paying seventeen to one. He was on a streak and rode it, winning the next five straight, doubling on the last one; and was four hundred and eighty to the good when he came back downtown.

Canyon City was too small for him now. Portland was too small. It was Frisco, no less. He bought some store clothes and a black tie, cached his jeans and hickory shirt in a dry wash outside of town and caught the night stage for Portland.

It was a dry trip south on the boat. There was plenty of red-eye on board, but Bill scorned it. He'd wait for champagne at Frisco. He got off at the foot of Market Street and started uptown, looking for a glittering dive. He came to a sign that said: COMSTOCK EXCHANGE. Crowds were milling there and he mingled with them. There was a big board on the wall inside, and men yelling. Boys dashed up with messages which they wrote on the board; and everybody yelled again.

And here, squalling with the best of them, was old Hymie Henry, who'd run a faro bank up on the Humboldt in the early days. Hymie was fat and prosperous, with a sparkler on his finger the size of a pigeon's egg. Bill asked what this free-for-all was. "The Comstock," says Hymie. "The big speculators are moving in. Stay away from it. It's a blooded game."

"That's me," said Bill. "Where-all do you buy chips?"

It seemed that you put five percent on the line and called your shot. Silver City was going at 40, so on this five percent business Bill bought two hundred chips, joined the Silver City crowd and started yelling. It was like a horse race except it went on day and night. Around midnight Silver City had reached 59 and Hymie whispered: "Drag." But Bill said, "I'm riding it," and went out and got a cheap room and ate a beefsteak in a Chink restaurant and came back.

At noon next day Hymie was practically in tears. Silver City was 106, but Bill wouldn't cash in. "You're crazy!" Hymie screamed. "Get away from me!" Bill cashed in at 157, and was very much surprised and pleased when they paid him off in greenbacks, to the tune of seventy-four hundred dollars.

"That's a good edge," he told Hymie.

"I'm in the brokerage business," said Hymie. "I need a crazy partner like you."

So Bill moved into Hymie's office and into a suite at the old Palace; and by Christmas he was riding in a carriage with Flood and hob-nobbing with Lucky Baldwin. There was one of the big boys

he heard about but didn't meet: some guy named Stanford, who was building a railroad.

In this brokerage business in which he was now entangled was a joker: it called for a genteel front. No sprees. You had to look-out your game at all times.

One day in early spring Bill swung around in his swivel chair and said to Hymie: "Listen, Hymie. Where's our percentage?"

"In the bank," said Hymie.

"We'll have it out," said Bill. "We'll give it a ride."

"You're crazy!" Hymie screamed.

They gave it a ride, spreading it out thin; and when the Comstock crashed many a blooded sport lost millions. Some had a percentage left, like Bill, but some they fished out of the Bay. This guy Stanford was smart: he'd stayed up in the Sierras, building his railroad.

When creditors moved in and took the furniture, Bill and Hymie went out and stood on the street corner and shivered. One of those heavy spring fogs had moved in from the sea. "Well?" said Hymie. "What do we eat on, my friend?"

"I dragged seven dollars," said Bill. "Just a hunch . . . We'll get drunk."

"Let's start on beer," said Hymie gloomily.

But Hymie slipped something into the beer and when Bill woke up he was cold and sick. It was no wonder he was cold; he was lying in the scuppers of a tramp schooner, heading north, and a red-handed bosun with a bucket was sluicing him with chill sea water.

BILL was still sick when he jumped ship at Portland and headed inland with a pack train bound for Canyon City. By the time he reached the dry wash outside of town he felt better. He found his old clothes where he had cached them, made a bonfire out of the salt-stained broadcloth and black tie, and headed for the claim.

Joel McIlroy saw him coming but only grunted by way of greeting and kept on shoveling. Bill grinned at him.

"D'ye know where I've been, Joel? Listen. . . ."

But Joel wouldn't listen. "Your sinful trails mean nothing to me. You spent that seven dollars, no doubt?"

"All of it," Bill admitted. "But I'll pay 'er back, Joel."

"That you will," said Joel. "Every sweat-stained cent of it, laddie . . . There's your shovel yonder."

The sun beat on Bill's back, warming him to the marrow. He sweated and grinned. The shovel blade had rusted over the winter but clean gravel would soon make it shine again. There was something about the high desert in late spring, with the crickets in the rimrock and a lone buzzard wheeling out there against the sky. It was good to have your spree over with and be back at work again, digging it out of the ground. Like that guy, Stanford, building his railroad.

No use admitting all this to Joel. Joel wouldn't understand. Joel would say—which was fact, of course, any way you looked at it—that it had cost seven dollars, a sinful waste of good, hard money.

BLACK VOYAGE

By

HARRY OLIVER

CAPTAIN WALKER watched them come aboard, five hundred regulars marching in their best. The July sun flashed back from the gold of their uniforms, and from the highlights on their boots and shakos of patent leather. The day made the colors brilliant—the red of the sashes around their waists, the yellow of the plumes of swan feathers, the blue of the silk lining to their cloaks, which they were so careful to flick open at each step.

Burns, the engineer, up for a breath of air, saw them.

"Pretty, ain't they?" he remarked. "Suppose he's takin' 'em out on the Illinois prairie like that? I can just see Neopope draw a bead on that spot. That

ILLUSTRATED BY GORDON GRANT

At the points of their muskets the soldiers got the supplies they needed.

one where those two straps come across in front."

"The show is just for the inhabitants. Most like, Fuss an' Feathers will keep up the parade until he gets there. He's proud of his army; it's he that's drilled them and dressed them until there's no finer even in Europe. But he is no fool. He just likes to show off a bit now and then. He's got buckskin field uniforms down in the hold," Walker told him.

Burns eyed the lanky general on the bank. Not a man was passing him, drummer boy to colonel, without being swept by those gray eyes.

"He were a pure devil on stilts at Lundy Lane, I heard say. Now the whole day he's fussed around like an old woman. Mate tells me there wasn't a bit of luggage stowed but what he had a hand to it," he said.

"He's got the contractors mad enough. Yesterday he ate rations all day. Last night he made them take back half the provisions," Walker remarked.

"Serves 'em good. This won't be any pleasure cruise. Least they should get should be a belly full of fit grub," Burns said. He wiped the sweat from his face with a piece of dirty waste, putting another smudge across it.

They were all aboard now, the last box in the hold and the last cannon lashed to the deck. The clamor of the embarkment softened into an expectant lull, the hush of a ship about to sail.

Walker climbed to the top of the big paddle box. He could show off a little now, himself, in his new uniform with the cutaway effect, the same exactly, he had been assured, that they were using on the Atlantic. But as he put his magnifone to his lips, his spirits fell. He had forgotten the oxen. There they came along the bank now, seven teams of them, nodding their fool heads, as they dragged a long six-inch hawser. The mate at his elbow was grinning.

"They always make me feel so silly," Walker said to him. "Today, more than ever, in front of Scott and all his officers."

"Not any sillier than the time you tried to make it up the river without them and got pushed back three times," the mate said.

"But after all, this is a steamboat. Her engines were designed by Robert Fulton, himself, and built by McQueen. And with all that, I've got to stand here like I was saying gee haw, while those dumb animals pull us up the river. You smart Alecks going around calling it the horned breeze don't help any either," Walker complained.

The water from the other four lakes pushed down the Niagara in a torrent to reach Ontario; it was always nip and tuck to beat it. Walker got his sails up, the mate touched the little signal cannon and it boomed; the paddles churned, and with the help of the bellied canvas and the straining oxen, she made the rapids and floated in the first big green lake.

IN 1832 death lay on the new land. Death that was black and swift in the east, from the cholera. Death that was red and sometimes all too slow in the west, death that rode on the arrows of Black Hawk and his braves as they revenged the rape of their lands. The *Sheldon Thompson* was one of four troop ships sent to take care of Black Hawk. The *Henry Clay* was just ahead; the *William Penn* and the *Superior* were following.

Her decks were piled with basswood for the boilers that hungered for it so much that the hold could not carry all they asked. The decks were strewn with cannon, and the men slept about them where they could. Rather a mess his ship was, Walker thought, as he passed a couple of wagons strapped to her. He stood by the wheel for a long time, saying good-night to her again. It was good to be out here again, he thought, away from the hot land into the cool of it, where he could listen to the creak of the ship's wood and the whine of the wind in her ropes. He could feel her big cylinder pull and haul at the walking beam. The water dropped off the paddles with a rustle that whispered to him. A soldier plunked a banjo and sang the *Blue Juniata*. The song died. He called the mate and went below.

For two long days and nights the big cylinder below pushed the long rod six feet to turn her paddles, and the sails caught whatever winds there were, and

she made her eight knots most of the time. She stayed close to the shore, for every six hours she must stop for more basswood. Men in the forest cut and piled it ready for her. At night the woodcutters lit bonfires to guide the ship in. Lake Erie narrowed and they were in a river.

Walker lowered his telescope. "It's the *Clay*," he told the mate. "She don't look right." In close, he looked again. "They been burning her. Her railings gone, and most of her paddle boxes."

A boat put out from the shore and the man in the stern of it cupped his hands and shouted.

"That's the pest ship! Stay away from her!"

The mate clanged the bell, and the engines came to a stop. As she spent her way the man shouted again.

"We got no plague in Fort Gratiot. Ain't going to have it neither. You can't land here."

"Where's the men from the *Clay?*" Walker asked.

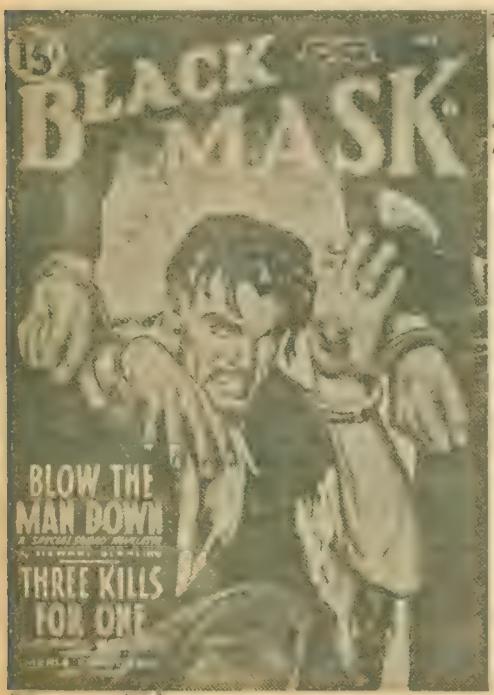
His importance now overcame his caution; the man motioned his rowers closer. "She came in last night. She came faster than any steamboat's got a right to go. Sparks flew out of her like she was a volcano. They were tearing the woodwork off her for fuel. Like madmen, they were. They started jumping off her before she touched the bank. Sweatin', white and shoutin' they were. They scared me, I tell you. I shut my wife and my kids in the house and stuck my gun out the window. I wouldn't let nary a one of 'em near. You can't blame me neither."

"The rest of you were as kindly?" inquired Walker.

"They were. Plague's not here I tell you. We chased 'em into the woods and a good job it were."

Walker touched the bell, and the ship pushed up to the wharf, its wash bobbing the little boat.

Search parties were sent into the forest for the men of the *Clay* but found none of them. Then, at the point of their muskets, the soldiers got the supplies they needed.



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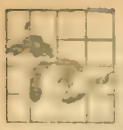

THE *Sheldon Thompson* chugged up Huron, stopped for fuel beneath the hills of Mackinac, and turned for the long haul down Michigan.

A man stumbled and fell to the deck. He writhed in his agony and his fists pounded the planking, while the rest saw the black come over him. The surgeon looked at him and said he would fetch his instruments. He was gone a long time.

Burns came up for his air, and Walker told him about it.

"That big sergeant of theirs, Heyl, just lifted his boot and let it crash through the door. General Scott went right into the stateroom and the surgeon was there in his bunk and snoring like a lord. He had a bottle of brandy and he'd drunk the half of it; the rest stood there on the chest. Scott said to them to let the coward lay, and that when he got back to Fort Munroe he'd see if he could have him shot. Then he muttered something to Heyl about the accursed politicians and how they were always sending him poltroons like that, and that even the surgeon wasn't much worse than some of the generals they had gotten him in the war, and that they probably wouldn't let him shoot the worm, but would promote him instead.

"The man still lay on the deck when we got back there, but he wasn't twisting as much. He had the whole front part of the ship for himself. From aft they were all watching him, and he was getting blacker and blacker. Scott walked up to where he lay and lifted him up careful, like he was a baby. He took him down to his own cabin and ripped the clothes from him, and we were all watching him from a safe distance. Then he opened the fellow's jaws and poured a tumbler of raw brandy down his throat; then he splashed the rest of the bottle all over the man's naked body. Then he rubbed him all over hard. We was getting kind of ashamed by now and Heyl slipped up and said, 'This ain't no job for you, sir, and you the general of the whole army. Let me do it.'

"And Scott let him, but he said as how if a general didn't take care of his army he wouldn't have any job at all pretty quick. Then he told me, as we were standing there then, that he had known we might have Asiatic cholera to contend with, and that he had gone to some big doctor in New York who'd told him that they didn't have much that could help but told him what to do and gave him a supply of the medicines they were using there, and that he had brought them with him and had them in a bag. Then he got them out and told Heyl how to use them."

Burns wiped his face with the waste he always had in his hand and the grease from it mixed with the sweat.

"That man's certainly the forehandedest creature I ever did hear of. Last night he was down lookin' at my engine and he wanted to know if I knew that it should get good care. And did I know that oil was cheaper than iron? Iron my foot! Those bearings are the best bronze that McQueen can buy in the whole of New York. But I did tell him that let ten minutes go by and my greaser didn't put somethin' on 'em, he could throw us both overboard."

"Then he stood there all straight up at attention," Walker went on, "and you should have seen them covering the whole deck, back in the uniforms they came aboard in. They all held their heads up straight in the blazing sun, touching their thumbs to the seams of their trousers. Our men were looking on like they thought they was all crazy. Then he told them that there was an enemy aboard. That it was an enemy that it was no use to post sentinels against, that there was no use to fortify against him. He said it dramatic, like he was playing a part on one of those theater stages in New York. He told them that this enemy wouldn't respect any flag of truce. He pointed to the cannon and he said that those were no good against them, nor any of their lances or swords. They haven't got any lances but I guess he just put them in to sound good. He stopped then and for a while he seemed to be looking each and every man of them in the eyes, one after another. Then he told them to keep clean, very, very clean, he said, and not to drink too much, meaning liquor. He said they would have no panic aboard like

they had on the *Clay* and that he'd shoot the first one of them that lost his head.

"He told them that the men on the *Clay* were all probably dead in the wilderness behind Fort Gratiot and that the vultures were likely at their bodies this minute. That he had good medicine and to trust their officers like they had always done. Then he let them go and I heard him tell that straight-up-and-down colonel they have, the one they call Twiggs, to work the devil out of them, and that discipline would take care of any army, no matter what might ail it. Even cholera, and I bet he believes it. He told him to keep them so busy they couldn't think, and that if they couldn't think they couldn't get scared."

ON THE *Sheldon Thompson*, no man was idle. There was drill and more drill, and equipment that was clean was cleaned again, then polished and oiled. Walker could see the value of this sort of thing for his own crew. He had the already spotless ship gone over again. The wind had failed and the lake was dead and flat; the sun fell on it; the glare came back to the eyes of the men like the blow of a fist. Yet he ordered the sails up. The mate said, "Cap'n where's the wind for 'em? You know this is no day for a wind to come on the lakes."

Walker looked up to where the sails hung without a wrinkle and said, "Seemed to me it was coming." He had them down then and the mate looked at him funny-like. Then in a short time came a ripple on the water from the land that they both knew did not mean a thing, and he had them up again. The mate wanted to say something but shut up. So with each puff he had them up, and when it died, as he knew it would, he got them down. The men looked back at him, where he stood by the wheel in the stern, and wondered.

But more men dropped, lay in the blazing sun and turned black. They carried them below, and soon the cabin was filled; then the deck lay strewn with men, knotted in their torment, crying out for death.

Old Fuss an' Feathers

They used the remedies they had that the far-off man in the east had given them. Opium, clorodyne, catechu, asafoetida, black pepper, and chalk. They opened the bottles and poured the contents into lips that were purple and dry. The first man died.

Heyl wrapped the man in his own blanket, made it fast with strips of canvas and tied a cannon ball to his feet. The chaplain said a prayer; the men fired a volley and let the body slip over the rail. The big cylinder gave a sigh from its depths and the paddles turned again.

And they did this several times that day; later they did not stop the ship, but dropped the bodies into the racing water at her stern.

The sun went down at last on the day, but no man looked at the beauty of it as, passing, it laid a golden sheen on the water, turned red and burning and slipped over the rim of the earth. Nor was there one to look at the moon later, when it turned the lake into a world of platinum, cold and still. No one slept that night except the men that were dead.

They lighted her stern with lanterns and they put more bodies into the black water.

The mate came up from below.

"That steward of theirs has gone clear

looney. Not that I blame him. I been watching him. He just sits with that big book of his in front of him and writes. He's been at it the whole live-long day. I couldn't help it, I just had to see what he was writing, so I looked over his shoulder. What do you suppose he is putting down there?" he said.

"It's an odd time to be doing it, but I suppose the man's keeping his records. That's his way of keeping busy I suppose, and that's what's wanted on this ship," Walker replied.

"Odd records he keeps then. He's drawing pictures all over the pages. Pictures of coffins and corpses. Skulls and crossbones. Him so quiet and his eyes so set. Gives me the creeps. Putting down poems, too. I won't forget one of 'em. He wrote it on that page where that young lieutenant had his account. I'll never forget how it went.

> So shalt thou feed on Death, that feeds on men;
> And Death once dead, there's no more dying then.

"Then he crossed out the whole page and put down 'Account closed by death' which is the same as he's written on each page where the man's account was that's dead."

"Well, since that page is likely the only headstone the poor fellow will ever have, what's the harm of putting a little Shakespeare on it?" said Walker.

"Shakespeare or no Shakespeare, the man's pure off his head, I say," answered the mate.

THE long night ended and the new light came over the lake, pink and soft; the water was opalescent, like the inside of a shell. A smart breeze came with the day and Walker knew they would soon be there. He went below and came up with a yellow flag. He sent it to the mast top and stood watching it flutter for a while.

They were passing high bluffs that soon leveled off to a sandy shore, and in a while he could see a log fort with a few shacks about it. There were some schooners and a brig out before the village. The men on them saw the yellow flag on the *Sheldon Thompson*, and they made sail right away. Soon they were just little specks of white on the blue. There was no harbor; Walker anchored out before the town. He looked at it to where the people, little dots of brown and white, were darting about, and then glanced up at the yellow of the flag.

"They'll be more 'fraid of that flag than they ever were of Black Hawk," he said to the mate.

"The General said—I heard him—that they need his regulars bad here. Said the militia's all right when they stay sober, but even then, they need a few regulars to steady 'em. He'll want to get going fast, I expect," the mate noted.

A doctor came from the shore. The villagers sent the provisions and things the *Sheldon Thompson* needed. But on shore they wanted little commerce with the ship. The doctor knew as little about the cholera as any one else. The devil from Asia lived in the water they were drinking; they could have put a drop or two of chlorine in it or they could have boiled it, and he would have left. The doctor added little to the treatment the sick men were getting; however, he ordered them wrapped in all the clothes and blankets they had. And so they sweltered through the hot days.

More men dropped, lay in the burning sun and turned black. Some recovered but every few minutes the chaplain said his prayer, and another body slipped into the water. They fired no volley now. Heyl, the big sergeant, rubbed the legs of the last man he nursed and then dropped over. A few hours later his wrapped body lay heavy on the deck. The General and his staff stood silent, with set eyes.

The body tipped on the rail and slid over. They stood like soldiers painted on the wood, for a long time. With him went something of the past for the older and something of the future for the younger. The off shore breeze waved the big plumes on their *Chapeau de Bras'*; but for that little motion the ship could have been engraved on the water of the lake. For a long time.

When they broke ranks, Twiggs said to Walker, "He was in the thick of it at Lundy Lane and Chippewa and a dozen

other places, just to die out here in this Godforsaken hole."

"A man can be alive and healthy at nine in the morning and at three in the afternoon there he is at the bottom of Lake Michigan," Walker replied.

Early next morning Burns came to Walker. "Let me give her a kick out a few yards, Cap'n. The crew want it."

"What's the matter with this anchorage? It seems to me one place is as bad as another around here," Walker said.

"Look over the rail," replied Burns.

The water at the ship's rail was crystal clear; through it Walker saw the sand of the bottom. There were men standing there, standing erect. As he stared, the current weaved them about, and, as they waved, they seemed to wrap themselves together in a dance—a dance macabre, sepulchral. His brain forced his eyes to them while the water calmed and the shot at their feet jerked them to a stop. And in their winding sheets they saluted him. Sick, he got his eyes back to the engineer's living face. Weakly he waved his arm out to the deep water.

AT LAST the soldiers were all gone. The ship was clear, even of the mattresses and the bedding that they had used. Burns went ashore with the ship's boats and came back with the wood of some shacks he had torn down for fuel.

"That fellow Scott's a queer 'un. He's got 'em all in the fort. He still nurses 'em himself. Know what he does when one of 'em that's well gets drunk? Takes him out to the graveyard and puts him to work diggin' a grave for himself. He tells him he's going to need it and he won't be able to spare any good men for the job. Says the galoot what gets drunk is going to die of the cholera."

Walker looked through his long telescope to the shore. The prairie rolled far to the horizon and the wind started long waves that passed over it so far that the eye lost them. A yellow-green ocean that was endless and lovely. Dotted all over, scarlet, blue and white with wild flowers.

The stack of the *Sheldon Thompson* was sending out billows of white smoke, pungent, pleasing in his nostrils.

"Do you know," he said to the mate, "this is the first steamboat ever in these parts?"

He touched the bell. As the ship swung around he looked back over the stern.

"They're calling it Chicago now instead of Fort Dearborn," he told the mate. "Might be a good place to settle down in, after the cholera is over and Black Hawk is on a reservation."

The sled overturned in a tangled mass of cursing men and howling dogs.

5,000 TROJAN HORSES

By

LESLIE T. WHITE

SYNOPSIS

ON FURLOUGH in Ottawa, after a long sojourn in the Ontario wilderness, CORPORAL STEVE PATTERSON, R.C.M.P., gets into a brawl which results in his dismissal from the Force by his superior, INSPECTOR BARNETT. He goes to say good-bye to LAURA MacGILLIVRAY, daughter of SERGEANT-MAJOR MacGILLIVRAY. Retired—but runs into the old man himself, who is showing his famous kennel of sled dogs to a tall, fair-haired man named ERNEST. MacGillivray refuses to let Patterson see his daughter—and Steve angrily starts back to town. He is over-

taken by Ernest who offers him a lift. Ernest is genial, talkative, tells Steve he is an American—and discusses the recent escape of Nazi airmen from the internment camp near Steve's old stamping grounds, northwest of Sault Ste. Marie.

Back in Ottawa, Steve finds his friend CORPORAL AUSTIN about to leave for the north, to help run down the escaped Nazis—one of whom is the top German ace, BARON VON WOLFGANG. Austin is astonished to hear of Ernest's knowledge of the "break"—a closely guarded secret. When Austin leaves, Steve phones Laura, learns that Ernest has bought six of MacGillivray's best sled dogs—including EMPEROR, a giant wolf-husky—and is looking for a man to handle the dogs.

Steve goes to Inspector Barnett, reveals his suspicions of Ernest and unfolds a scheme to capture the escaped Nazis. Barnett promises him reinstatement in the Force if successful. In order to publicize Steve's break with the R.C.M.P., the two men stage a brutal fight. When it is broken up by troopers Steve shouts, "To hell with the Force! To hell with Canada!" and is thrown into jail in disgrace. But his purpose is achieved, for he is bailed out by Ernest—who now admits to Steve that he is a Nazi—and hired to handle his dogs.

ILLUSTRATED BY HAMILTON GREENE

They travel northwest by train, disembark in the wilderness to be met by a guide—VASHA—and trek on snowshoes further north to a cabin in a clearing. Here they find Vasha's squaw, ALICE, and two of the escaped Germans—the arrogant, young Baron von Wolfgang, and DAGOR—stolid and heavy-set. The Nazis plan to engineer another "break" at the internment camp. The MacGillivray dogs are due next day, with supplies for twelve.

The following morning, the dogs arrive—with Laura MacGillivray! Ernest has tricked her into accompanying them on a trip to his "mining property." With Laura as hostage, the Nazis are assured of Steve's compliance with their demands.

In the bitter cold, they set out toward the prison camp—Steve handling the MacGillivray dogs; Vasha his own. Laura is still unaware of the true situation, and Steve keeps his counsel. That night, Steve saves Ernest—now Ernst—from a severe case of frozen feet, and the German tells him cryptically that they will "see this thing through together." But Steve has little doubt of his fate, if he fails to outwit the Nazis.

On the second day, they come to a spot above the main trail and see below them an R.C.M.P. constable driving a dog-team with a breed ahead, breaking trail. It is Corporal Austin—heading for the prison camp! Wolfgang suddenly lifts his gun—a high-powered rifle, equipped with silencer—and shoots the breed. Austin is overpowered. Wolfgang orders Steve to don the corporal's uniform, go to the camp in his place. Much to Austin's scorn, Steve obeys—Vasha going along as his driver.

At the camp, COLONEL BALDWIN and CAPTAIN WIRE show Steve about, and give him the details of the escape. Baldwin, a camera bug, snaps

a picture of Steve and Vasha. Steve turns in early. At three o'clock next morning, he is awakened by the banging of the general alarm. Another "break" has been made—three sentries are dead and five men have escaped! Steve reaches a decision: Despite Laura's and Austin's dangerous position, he must seek Inspector Barnett's help. He phones Ottawa, and learns that Barnett—the only man who knew the truth about Steve, that he is loyally trying to trap the Nazis instead of aid them—has been shot and killed two days before!

PART II

STEVE PATTERSON sat with his hand still on the receiver and stared at the instrument for a long time. He felt punch-drunk. Inspector Barnett dead—*shot and killed two days ago,* the operator had said. It was incredible! Iron men like Barnett never died! Steve simply didn't believe it!

And yet he knew it to be true. Ernst had either known or guessed about Barnett's connection with Steve. Patterson recalled the contact the Nazi agent had made in the little lunch-room back in Ottawa with one of his confederates. Perhaps Barnett's death had been arranged for then, while Steve sat smugly finishing his meal.

Red rage welled up inside Patterson now until he could feel his pulse beating angrily against his temples. And then it quieted miraculously, leaving him very cold, very calm. He pushed the telephone away from him and with steady hands built himself a cigarette. It was thus Vasha found him.

The guide appeared in the door, his dark face a solid mask with only his feverish eyes testifying to the excitement within him.

"Hurry, you," he said in his guttural voice. "We go now—just me an' you, alone."

Steve didn't quite trust his voice yet, so he merely nodded. Vasha turned to go, then shot a suspicious glance at the telephone. He hesitated, came back into the room.

"What you doing?" he demanded.

Steve turned his head. "Get the hell out of here!" he barked.

When the Austrian scuttled out, Steve rose slowly. He looked down at the uniform he wore, let his hands slide down over the scarlet tunic, thinking of what it stood for in all these great woods and in the minds and hearts of Canadians, from Victoria to Halifax. Jim Austin had worn the full dress scarlet, instead of the brown bush jacket, not only because he was paying an official visit to the concentration camp, but because he was seeking out his country's enemies. In that traditional uniform, the wearer was no longer an individual, he was a symbol of a great nation and the embodiment of Anglo-Saxon law. Steve felt suddenly humble and unworthy. It was no longer important now whether he lived or died; it was not even terribly important what happened to Jim, even to Laura. What counted now was that he carry on in the spirit of the Force.

Outside, he met Colonel Baldwin and Captain Wire. "I'll head out at once," Steve said. "My dogs are ready."

"You'd better take some men along," the officer suggested.

Steve shook his head. "Let me handle this in my own way," he said, and when he saw the colonel flush, he added: "I can travel much faster alone."

"But five escaped!" protested Wire.

"They are aliens," said Steve Patterson.

The colonel shook his head. "I hate to see you go alone," he said reluctantly. "They can't get far, y'know. A couple of days in those woods and the blighters'll wish they were back in their warm barracks."

Vasha had driven the dogs out to the gate and was waiting.

"We'll send out patrols, anyhow," volunteered the colonel. "Just in case. Is there anything we can do to assist you?"

"Telephone Ottawa," Steve advised. "Have them seal up the border."

"I thought you telephoned."

Steve shook his head. "I couldn't get my boss," he said, and strode stiffly to his team.

Vasha stayed behind Steve as they ran the dogs out through the gate and

headed up the slope to the timber line. When they turned into the trees, he halted the dogs, and faced Steve. From a pocket under his parka, he took out a grenade and raised it threateningly.

"You put gun on sled and back away!" he ordered.

"It's not loaded, you fool!"

"Maybe yes, maybe no," grunted the Austrian. "I take no chance."

You think you don't, you stinking rat! Steve muttered under his breath. But he jerked the rifle from his shoulder without further argument and tossed it on the sled. Vasha sidled over, flipped the bolt to make sure it was unloaded, then with a grin, pocketed his grenade and hurried to the head of the outfit. Steve picked up the empty rifle and slung it over his shoulder.

"w-HEAT, w-HEAT!" he shouted at the dogs, and the sled swung forward.

CHAPTER IX

NORTH TO LITTLE LOON

THE snow was coming down in great, heavy flakes now, blotting out their trail. Vasha held his course in a comparatively straight line with such sureness that Steve knew he had been over this ground many times before. When they hit a small creek, Vasha hesitated a moment, then swung sharply west again. After following the corkscrew bed of the creek for another hour, he turned north.

This dawn was not like the last one. It rose gray and bleak, bringing with it a flurry of wind that moaned softly through the trees and shook down the padded cushions of snow.

Steve reminded himself of the little guide beneath the cairn; of the three sentries, whose names he didn't even know. And there was Inspector Barnett. They must all be avenged. No, he thought, *avenged* is not the way Barnett would have phrased it. They must be justified; they must not have died in vain.

Vasha continued his course in a series of huge spirals. In the murky thickness of the snow fall, Steve almost lost track of direction. But his woods craft stood him in good stead now. He watched the trees, knowing that the branches are fewer and shorter on the north side, and that the snow drifts deeper on the south.

By thus recrossing his own trail several times, Vasha seemed satisfied at last that they were not being followed, so he swung north once more. Another hour of hard going brought them to a small lake, where, on the opposite shore, stood a pine-capped hill, that looked like a Stetson hat. They came down on it with the wind behind them, and Vasha suddenly raised his arms and lurched clumsily along like a man with a gun pointed at him.

As they slowed for the climb, Dagor and Wolfgang stepped out of the willows on either side.

"You are late," growled the Baron.

"The snow was thick," mumbled Vasha. "I was careful."

Wolfgang looked at Patterson. "I trust," he said, "you were wise. It has been a temptation to shoot that arrogant dog whose uniform you wear."

"I saw him at the telephone," Vasha reported.

Wolfgang's sharp face darkened, and then he smiled. "You were not foolish enough to try any tricks, my Corporal?"

"Cut it," snapped Steve. "You're holding all the aces, and you know it. I warn you of just one thing, Wolfgang—you harm Austin or that girl, and I'll . . ." He stopped, pushing back the rage that lay smoldering so close to the surface.

"You're a fool, Patterson!" said the Baron contemptuously. "A damned British fool! You let your confused passions rule your every action. It paralyzes what little brains nature gave you originally. Don't threaten me. You live at all only because I have use for you. Remember that." He waved Vasha up the hill. "Now get moving, and let's hear no more from you."

Steve shut up, and followed the team. *You live only because I have use for you! Remember that.* He was grateful for the reminder, for in his anger, he had forgotten. Wolfgang had use for him; Wolfgang also had use for five mechanics and a bombardier. He'd remember that also.

Dagor swung his gun and clubbed him to the snow.

The others were waiting in the grove at the top of the hill. After Steve's eyes searched out Laura and Jim Austin and found them alive, he looked at the five prisoners who had escaped. Dressed in the clothes which Wolfgang had brought for them, they looked as much alike as five pups in a litter, and because they spoke only German, they clung together in a huddle.

"You'd better clear out of here," Steve advised Wolfgang. "The army is putting out its own patrols."

Wolfgang sneered. "Your concern is touching, Patterson." He stared thoughtfully back over the trail, then with a significant glance at Dagor, walked back to the edge of the hill. The dogs, Steve noted, were waiting in harness.

He bent to pat old Emperor, when Austin walked over and faced him.

"Now that you've done your treason," rasped the constable, "get out of that uniform."

Steve flushed. Without taking his eyes from Austin, he could feel the others standing around; the newly escaped prisoners in a little knot to one side; Alice, the squaw, and Laura, two shadowy mounds among the trees; Dagor, enjoying the dissension between the two Canadians; and Ernst, cynical and amused, resting by the remains of a fire.

"O. K.," Steve muttered. "If that's the way you feel about it."

"It's exactly the way I feel about it," grated Austin. "It ought to be fumigated."

WITH a shrug, Steve pulled the rifle from his shoulder and leaned it against a tree beside them. Then he unbuttoned the leather flaps on the fur jacket and started to pull it off. . . .

He didn't see the blow coming. Austin poked him a short left hook in the middle that doubled him into position for a round-house right that sent him staggering against Dagor. Before he could pick himself off the ground, Austin had seized the rifle and snapped the bolt.

"Nobody move!" he commanded, moving the gun in an all-inclusive arc. "I arrest you all in the name of the King!" His lip curled contemptuously. "Go on, make just one move, any of you—I'd enjoy the legal right to kill the lot of you!"

Steve climbed slowly to his feet. No one else moved. He stole a quick glance around, but Wolfgang and Vasha were not in sight. Dagor was black with rage, but Ernst regarded it all with paternal amusement.

"Don't be a damn fool!" he drawled. "Put down that gun."

Austin ignored him. "Laura! Turn your dogs—we're getting out of here. Slash those other harnesses and free those mongrels!"

She hesitated, while her eyes sought out Steve's. Then, "Yes, Jim," she said quietly, and ran over to Emperor.

Steve felt a fierce pride in her, knowing the torn emotions that must make her every move a torment. He wanted to advise her, to offer suggestions for their escape, but he kept his peace. And then he saw a movement down-trail, and the thing he dreaded most came to pass. Wolfgang, closely heeled by Vasha, stepped out of the forest and stopped

less than fifty paces away from them.

Austin saw him and whipped the rifle to his shoulder.

"Drop that rifle!" he shouted. "Advance with your hands in the air!"

Wolfgang turned his head and looked at his companion. Vasha parted his lips in a warped smile, nodded.

"Your last warning!" called Austin. "Drop it!"

Steve's own senses were addled from the blow he had received. He had forgotten that the Lee-Enfield was empty until he saw Wolfgang calmly raise his sporting rifle with the silencer still attached.

"Jim—for God's sake . . ." he started, but too late.

Austin pressed his finger on the trigger. The gun clicked, harmless. Wolfgang took his own time. Austin snapped the bolt again. Again a click! With a bitter oath, he flung the useless weapon aside and started a mad plunge down the trail toward the Baron.

Wolfgang let him get a dozen paces before he fired!

Jim Austin ran a couple of steps, sagged to his knees and tried to crawl. Then he fell on his side and stretched full length in the snow. He lay still.

Steve's control snapped. "You dirty ————!" he bellowed, and made a jump for the trail. Dagor swung his gun and clubbed him to the snow. As Steve tried to rise, he saw Wolfgang walk over to Austin's inert figure and point the gun down.

"Don't, don't!" Steve screamed. "You can't murder him!" He tried to crawl, the blows of Dagor striking him without feeling.

It was Ernst who sprang across the intervening space and caught the Baron's arm.

"*Verflucht!*" he cried, and pushed the muzzle of the rifle away from Austin.

Wolfgang swiveled, white with rage. Ernst stood his ground and clung to the barrel. What he said in German, Steve did not know, but it was a long time taking effect. Finally Wolfgang's temper cooled. He jerked his gun out of the agent's hand, and stalked away.

Ernst stood straddled across the unconscious Austin and glared at Steve.

"Get up, and dump this imbecile on the sled!" he ordered grimly. "He still breathes." He exhaled a long, audible sigh. "Patterson, it's up to you to make certain such a scene is not repeated. You understand?"

Steve staggered to his feet. Somehow he managed to nod, and weave his way unsteadily to Austin's side. But as he bent over the man, Laura ran over and shouldered him aside.

"Don't you touch him!" she cried savagely. "Don't dare lay your filthy hands on him! You . . . you Nazi!"

Steve was too sick to resist. He sat limply in the snow and cupped his head in his hands. He realized he was the cynosure of every eye, but never since he had been a small boy, had he wanted to cry so badly. Ernst bumped him with his knee.

"Come out of it," he said dryly. "Wolfgang wants to talk with us up ahead."

He gave Dagor an order in German, turned clumsily on his snowshoes, and lurched toward the pines, where Wolfgang and Vasha had disappeared.

Steve climbed painfully to his feet. Big Alice the squaw was lifting the limp Austin onto the sled, mumbling in an undertone as though to herself.

"When the fox run straight at the gun of the hunter like a stupid bull," she droned in Cree, "this thing happens. But the fox is a fox because he was so conceived by the Great Spirit. He was given cunning which is greater than the strength of the bull, which is no use against bullets."

"Stop chattering like a squirrel!" sobbed Laura. "Tell me, my sister, is he hurt bad? Will he live?"

Alice nodded. "He will live. He is like the hurt fox who plays dead to deceive the hunter."

Steve mumbled a little prayer of thanks, and staggered after Ernst.

AS STEVE trudged into the grove, he saw the three waiting for him to join them. Their manner plainly indicated that this was to be a show-down of sorts. Under a lop-sided jack-pine that acted as a protective canopy against the snow, Wolfgang had spread out a map on a

large stump. Ernst was smoking a cigar, turning it meditatively between his thin lips. His face was paler and grimmer than usual, and his eyes lacked their customary cynicism. Vasha hefted his gun in nervous anticipation. The Baron had regained his composure, and he looked more deadly than in a rage.

"Patterson," he said with chilling calm, "we have reached a crossroads. What happens now rests, to some measure, with you."

Steve didn't miss the challenge, and he realized how much depended on his replies to this conference. He sensed that Ernst had succeeded in gaining only a temporary respite for the hostages, and what it had cost him, Steve could only guess. He wondered what game the agent was playing. He was not deluded into thinking it was for any reason other than self-preservation.

"I'm flying blind," Steve said. "Up to now, I thought I knew or could guess what you wanted. But we've been heading steadily north. We'll have to back track if you still want to go to the border."

"Would that suit you best?" jeered Wolfgang.

Ernst spoke slowly, as if weighing each word. "I cautioned you several times, Patterson, that you have no choice but to obey orders."

"Haven't I?" Steve growled.

"With rare bad taste," Ernst reminded him. "The Baron would be justified in executing you all. I'm sure you admit that."

"You've lied from the start," Steve insisted grimly.

"Lie?" flared the Baron. "You quibbling fool! While we play for a nation, a world, a new order—you, you common swine, speak of lying! Bah!"

Steve bit back a retort. He sensed, somehow, that Ernst was urging him to play his cards as they fell. One could almost hear the clash of personalities in the tiny woods arena.

"Now look here, Wolfgang," Steve argued doggedly, "you've been sniping and sharp-shooting at me from the start. Why? Ernst here made a deal with me to run dogs and guide him in this country. I'm still wondering why."

Ernst chewed his cigar across his mouth. "You want to see our hand? Is that it, my friend?"

Steve shrugged. "If you know where you're going, you don't need me. If you don't know, it's high time you talked it over. This is no picnic ground. I can find my way around this section if I can fix a point of departure. But if you get lost floundering blind, don't expect me to pull you out of it."

The agent gave Wolfgang a significant glance, and Steve felt he had made a point. Then Ernst spoke rapidly in German. Wolfgang answered haughtily, but finally he spread his hands in resignation.

Ernst gave a little sigh and flicked ash from his cigar.

"The Baron agrees that perhaps you are right," he said slowly. "While the Baron could undoubtedly find his way to our destination without your help"—he paused briefly to let that thought soak in—"he has decided to be candid with you."

Steve waited.

Ernst smiled. "We are now going to the mine."

"You're trying to keep up that fiction," sneered Steve. "If that's your notion of candor, we may—"

"But it is the truth," Ernst chuckled. "There is a mine. At the mine—"

"*Verflucht!*" barked Wolfgang. "Enough! Patterson, look at this map. We are here now." He blew on his bare finger to warm it and then pointed to a spot on the map. "You will find the best and quickest way to get us to Little Loon Lake. It is about seventy miles."

Steve looked at the map. "Seventy as the goose flies, Baron," he interrupted. "But we're not geese. Or, perhaps I should say—we can't fly. By trail, at least another forty miles will be added, due to the terrain."

The Baron made a gesture of impatience. "No matter. You will mark now the course."

"I can't mark it now," protested Steve. "Part of that section has never been surveyed. It's wild, I tell you. However, I can find my way over to Little Loon."

"If you were to fail . . ." threatened the German stiffly.

"If I fail, we'll all be in the same boat," Steve told him dryly. "And when we get there—what?"

Wolfgang's mouth curled slightly.

Ernst put in hastily: "We'll cross that bridge when we come to it, Patterson." He frowned perceptibly at Steve.

Steve bent over the map. "O.K. Since there are no habitations to worry about, we'd better swing in a northerly arc to follow the lakes and rivers. It's longer, measured on the map, but immeasurably quicker."

"Very well," said the Baron. "We will leave at once."

Steve started to fold the map, but Wolfgang snatched it out of his hands. "The map stays with me," he snapped. Folding it carefully, he thrust it into his parka. "Now we shall go back to the others."

JIM AUSTIN was packed on his own sled. He lay in a sleeping bag, swathed in furs and tarps until just the upper part of his face was visible. Steve started over to ask how he felt, but when he saw the cold anger in Austin's dark eyes, and the hurt confusion in Laura's, he turned away.

"Patterson, you will go ahead and break trail," ordered the Baron. "I will handle your dogs. The girl and the cripple will follow. Vasha will bring up the flank. In case you are lonely, Patterson, Dagor will accompany you."

"Those dogs—" Steve began, but the Baron cut him short.

"Your advice is not needed," barked the German. "I know how to handle dogs, as well as men!"

Steve looked at Emperor, stretched on the snow with his great muzzle resting on his forepaws. He was watching the Baron as if he knew the man was talking about him. It made Steve sick at his stomach, for he knew that already there was an antagonism building between Wolfgang and the huge wolf-husky. Anything Steve might say now would only make it worse, so he turned and jogged off along the trail.

Dagor swung in behind him, keeping enough space between so that Steve could not turn on him unexpectedly. Steve ignored him, and plodded down the other side of the hill.

As he expected, he found a creek whose frozen surface made a perfect roadbed. Sheltered by the hill, there was no wind, and the snow fell lazily. After a few minutes of travel, he heard the crunch of snowshoes behind, and glancing back, he saw Ernst striving to overtake him. He waited for the agent to catch up, and they moved ahead side by side.

"How are the feet now?" Steve asked.

Ernst was out of breath. "It was pure wizardry," he panted. "They feel wonderful."

Steve didn't say anything, so after a long pause, Ernst remarked: "I suppose you realize what would have happened to me if I had become crippled, don't you?"

"I could guess."

"I wonder why you fixed me up, under the circumstances."

"You paid me back when you kept that damn Baron from killing Austin."

"No," disagreed Ernst, with surprising candor. "I did that in self-protection. Your face showed plainly that you would have put up a fight. Wolfgang would have killed you as well. Then where would I be?"

"In the middle of the Canadian wilderness with a maniac," Steve said dryly.

"Exactly! Not a very entrancing picture, my friend."

Steve glanced at the man. "You're a peculiar bird. I can't understand you."

"Oh, yes you can. I'm merely a realist, Patterson. Like your wolf-dog, Emperor, if you please. I'm interested in myself, first, last, and all the time."

"The Baron. . . .?"

"The Baron is interested in the *Fuehrer* with the same fanatical devotion you hold for your Force, and its silly traditions."

Steve let that sink in. "Am I to assume," he asked at length, "that you are siding with me, against Wolfgang?"

"Not at all, not at all. I'm solely concerned with my own safety. Whoever furthers that, is my ally; he who endangers it, my enemy. Simple, isn't it?"

"On the contrary," growled Steve.

"It seems hopelessly complex to me."

Steve glanced back over his shoulder. Dagor was plodding along about twenty paces behind, watching them with hot little rat-eyes. Ernst caught the look, and laughed.

"Don't worry about that ape," he said, grinning. "He's dangerous only on orders. Devoid of imagination, he couldn't conceive that I might be discussing the finer points of survival with you." He chuckled as if remembering something. "Did you note the exaggerated hatred the Baron holds for you Britishers?"

"It's hardly the attitude of the professional soldier," Steve admitted.

"Of course, Wolfgang has been raised on hate," Ernst explained. "But it was more or less mere nationalism until he was forced down in Scotland. To be taken prisoner was bad enough, but he was captured by a group of venerable Scottish Home Guardsmen. He'd just dropped all his bombs in a farm field, and damned if those Scots didn't hand Baron Wolfgang a shovel and make him fill up every hole with his own hands." Ernst laughed softly. "I'm sure the dear Baron had never touched a shovel in his life. The shock damn near killed him. His pride suffered horribly."

"You'll have to excuse me if I shed no tears," Steve said, with a dry smile. "I wish they'd buried him in the hole and shoveled the dirt on top of him."

"Tut-tut, Patterson!" Ernst chided. "There is nothing personal in war. One must regard it purely as an economic necessity. Or do I bore you?"

When Steve made no answer, Ernst grinned. "Ah, I see that I do."

Steve kept his eyes ahead. He saw the saddle-back in the ridge ahead, judged without conscious thought that it would save time that way, and left the creek bed to work up the slope. All the time his mind was wrestling with the greater problem of what was to come. He was caught up on a treadway of his own manufacture. It was like a tunnel in that there was only one direction—forward. If he tried to lose these aliens in the wilderness, it would cost the lives of Laura and Jim, to say nothing of his own. Wolfgang was smart. With the map in his possession, and all the equipment, it was entirely possible that he could, in time, find Little Loon Lake without help.

And what would happen to the three of them when the journey was ended? Ernst had suggested that they would cross that bridge when they came to it. Steve's mouth drew into a thin, tight line. He wanted to know what was on the other side of that bridge before he stepped onto the middle of it.

CHAPTER X

WHIP AND FANG

ERNST had fallen back by the time they reached the crest, and Steve decided it was time to rest—to spell the dogs a smoke, as the old voyageurs phrased it. He hunkered down in the lee of a large pine, and shaking off his mittens, rolled himself a cigarette. The snow had stopped falling, but the air was thick and murky. Steve scowled at the sky. There was no indication of a storm, yet he sensed intuitively that one was building, probably in the north, in which case it would sweep down, bringing a raw cold that would make travel sheer agony.

He heard the crack of a whip, clear as a pistol shot, and walked back to the edge of the slope. He could see the cavalcade sweeping along the creek bed. They were staying close together. Wolfgang trotted behind the first team, then came Austin's outfit, with Jim invisible on the sled, the big squaw padding moose-like beside him and Laura swinging along behind. Next came the five fugitives—with Vasha in the rear.

Watching, Steve sensed suddenly that something was wrong. But he couldn't tell just what it was. He counted them again, straining to make sure that Jim Austin was alive and safe on the sled. As he moved downhill to meet the vanguard, Ernst and Dagor ranged on either side of him.

"What's the matter?" asked the agent.

Steve couldn't tell him. Then as his eye swung back over the column, he knew. Emperor was missing! The team of little Siberians looked strangely like

"Now my mutinous friend, I'll give you a sample of what I give the dogs!"

the tail of a kite—flying without the kite!

"The lead dog!" growled Steve. "He's not there!"

Ernst whistled. "Easy, mister, easy! I'm not surprised! The Baron can't stand insubordination, as I warned you."

Steve lengthened his stride. "If he's harmed that big dog, I'll. . . ." He clenched his fists and hurried on.

Ernst snapped something in German to Dagor. Steve didn't understand it and he didn't give a damn. He was blind with rage. He stumbled down the trail until he came face to face with Wolfgang. The three teams came to a halt.

"Where's my lead dog?" Steve demanded, unmindful of his own safety.

Wolfgang curled his long whip. "*Your* dog? I was under the impression we bought this team."

"You heard me!" Steve shouted. "Where is he?"

The Baron drew himself up stiffly. "Don't take that tone to me, you swine! I killed him! He refused to jump when I gave orders, so I beat him to death! Have you any objection?"

Steve lunged forward, but Ernst had anticipated him. The agent stood on the back of Steve's snowshoes, so that Steve was riveted to the snow. His jump ended when he sagged to his knees. Wolfgang sprang backward and the rawhide whip

lashed out. It caught Steve flush across the cheek, drawing blood.

Steve wrenched his feet free of the snowshoes, but before he could stagger to his feet, Dagor pounced on him and bore him full length on the trail. Instantly the others sprang to help, and in a couple of minutes, Steve Patterson was firmly spread-eagled in the snow.

Baron Wolfgang trailed the whip and walked over. "Now, my mutinous friend, I'll give you a sample of what I give to dogs!" He flexed the whip and braced himself.

It was Laura who ran up and grabbed his arm. "Please, Baron!" she sobbed. "Don't! We've had enough horror! We'll never get out of these woods if you kill him!"

Wolfgang gave her an amused stare. "You beg for the swine?"

"I'm asking you not to," Laura choked. "For all our sakes."

Ernst bent over Steve. "You impossible, incredible fool!" he snarled. "You risk all our lives for a damned dog! What kind of a soldier are you?"

Steve licked his lips, but kept silent. The German was right. Under ordinary circumstances, he would have fought any man who harmed Emperor. But if the big wolf-husky were dead, there was little point in sacrificing the safety of them all out of revenge.

"I guess I lost my head," he grumbled. "I was fond of that brute."

Wolfgang sneered. "The *fräulein's* tears will save you this time, Patterson. I am a sentimentalist, it seems. Next time you will not get off so easily. Now crawl up ahead where you belong!"

At his nod, the men released their holds, and Steve stood up. Laura had turned away, but as he glanced toward the second sled, he read approval in Austin's angry eyes.

He had been a fool! Later, perhaps, he could settle his account with Baron Wolfgang. Meanwhile . . . He stumbled back up the slope.

IN MID afternoon, the sun drove a wedge through the overcast and shouldered the gray clouds down to the very horizon, where they lay sullenly, like a dark girdle. Wolfgang ordered the little cavalcade to tighten its ranks, and Steve, still beating trail, was instructed to stay within hailing distance and to avoid crossing any wide open spaces.

Less than two hours later, the first of the planes arrived. Tramping along with his parka hood over his ears, Steve didn't recognize the sound. It started as a faint humming in the back of his skull, such as might have been caused by the blows Dagor had given him. He could *feel* it, rather than hear it. It swelled and faded, then swelled again until it became a steady drone that permeated his whole body. Then Wolfgang shouted a curt command. Steve threw back his parka hood and looked up. An instant later they were racing for the shelter of the trees.

Standing with his back against a blackened pine, Steve shielded his eyes and watched the dun-colored training planes sweep out of the southern sky. Three war birds flying due north. They were spaced about a mile apart, and the middle one would pass almost directly overhead. As it thundered above, Steve could see the helmeted observer looking out first one side and then the other as the pilot rocked the plane for better visibility.

"You're looking for tracks," Steve said bitterly, "but you won't find any. These damn Nazis think of everything."

The planes passed on, their harsh breathing fading swiftly on the north wind. Half an hour later they cruised back, a little to the westward this time. They left behind them a feeling of utter loneliness in Steve Patterson.

Four-hundred-mile-an-hour planes, guns that shoot for twenty miles, bombs that wreck a city, cavalry of thirty ton tanks, and yet, mused Steve, behind each of these is a man. Take them away, or let them lie idle, you still reduce it to the simple terms of man to man. It is strange, he thought, that in this most modern of all wars, here am I fighting with the most ancient of weapons—my knowledge of the land, my land. Slaughter is so very simple: you stop the other fellow's heart beat, or he stops yours. The mightiest gun that science can produce, can do no more than that. The

Nazis prefer to do it with aircraft, yet the Indian can lightly press a moccasined foot on the skin above a man's heart, and stop life with equal facility.

For God's sake don't get philosophical, he warned himself.

Wolfgang stamped over when the plane had disappeared. "We'll camp here until sunset," he growled. "Then we travel at night. No fires."

Steve nodded, and after a moment's hesitation, walked over to the second sled. Alice, the squaw, had pulled it into a little pocket formed by alders, and was examining Austin's wound. Laura stood by, ready to help.

"How is it, my sister?" Laura asked in Cree.

The squaw grunted, then out of the corner of her eye, she saw Steve standing off to one side.

"It is very bad, or very good, my little sister," answered Alice, in her own tongue.

"How can it be both?"

"Simple," the squaw said. "Is the wolf less dangerous because one leg must drag? Oh, no, my foolish little sister. His brain then works very hard, and his teeth are still sharp."

"You talk in riddles!" exclaimed Laura impatiently.

"Only because thy head is clouded by misunderstanding," mumbled the squaw. "Let thy man attend to his fighting, do not try to reason whether he is doing it right, or wrong. That is up to him. You must stand behind him. Or some other woman will."

Austin fretted restlessly. "What's all that mumbo-jumbo mean?" he complained.

Laura's face was red. She glanced sharply at Steve, then looked away. The squaw caught the exchange, straightened, and beckoned Laura away. Steve was left alone with Jim Austin.

Steve met the constable's gaze. "Can I build you a smoke, Jim?"

"No!" snapped Austin. "I want nothing from—" He paused, then with a shrug, growled: "Why not? God knows I need one."

STEVE sat on the edge of the sled so that he could watch the others. As he began to shake tobacco out of the sack, he said: "There's no time for details. That will come later, I hope. For the time being, don't raise any more dust with this gang."

"Your concern touches me," Austin sneered.

"I know how you feel, Jim. You think I'm helping these swine to escape."

"Think?"

"Haven't you wondered why we're heading northwest?"

It was obvious Austin had been too enraged to worry about direction. Steve smiled bitterly. "At a God-forsaken spot called Little Loon Lake, the Nazis have a cache of some kind in an old mine."

Austin said nothing. Steve glanced around to where Vasha was handing out rations to the others.

"You can make a rough guess what happens to us when we get there," he finished.

"I don't get it," Jim said slowly. "From what I've heard, these swine bailed you out of jail and you went over to them."

"You know me better than that."

Austin accepted the cigarette and nosed the tip into the match flame Steve held for him. "Go on, Steve."

"How bad is your wound?"

"Yes, tell us—I'm curious about that point myself," Ernst chuckled behind them.

Steve swung around. He hadn't heard the agent approach, nor did he know how much the man had heard.

"It passed through my side," Austin said casually. "Fortunately it was a steel-jacketed bullet so the wound is small and clean."

"*Hmmmm!* Can you walk?" the German asked.

"Not a chance," Austin admitted. "It played hell with the leg muscles or something of the kind."

Ernst gave Steve a significant glance. "Too bad," he commented. "Just too bad." He sauntered back to the others.

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"Now what in hell did he mean by that?" growled Austin.

Steve's own smoke tasted suddenly very flat. He tossed it into the snow. "I'm not sure," he said. "I haven't figured that bird."

Austin was staring at him with thoughtful eyes. "I haven't figured you either, Steve," he said. "I thought perhaps I had, until you tried to commit suicide by jumping that Nazi swine for killing the dog."

"How did it happen—about Emperor, I mean?"

Austin scowled. "I tried to climb off my sled at him when it happened," he grated. "The dirty———! Somehow he seemed to have had it in for the big brute. He started it by walking up and kicking him in the stomach to make him stand. Emperor jumped at him, and he clubbed him down. The dog kept trying until his head was pulp, then he lay down and died."

Steve's face went white. Austin crushed his smoke between his fingers. "The Baron continued to pulverize the dog after he was dead. He's a sadist of the worst kind. That big squaw stopped it. She pushed him aside, and told him it would get all the dogs fighting. Then she unharnessed the poor devil and tossed him into the bush. Laura took it very hard."

"I don't wonder. I'm glad I wasn't there." Steve pushed to his feet. "I'll get you something to eat."

He was halfway to the food sled, when Wolfgang called him for another consultation over the map. Steve memorized the general lay of the next dozen miles before the Baron refolded the map and put it back in his jacket.

He saw then that Laura had taken food to Jim, and he had no stomach to join them. He helped himself to a few bannocks, and went off by himself to eat.

He was hunkered down with his back to a stump when he witnessed a puzzling incident. The squaw shuffled over to the food sack, fished out a bannock and put it in her mouth. Then she glanced surreptitiously around, and apparently satisfied that no one was watching her, snatched up a chunk of pork and stuffed it under her parka. After that, she waddled off into the brush.

Steve was still trying to figure it out when he heard Wolfgang's harsh command: "Attention! We march now!"

THEY made over twenty miles during the night. Having no fear of the planes, they kept in the open, and had a good run up a small river. The pace was grueling, and even Steve was weary when, just before dawn, they reached a frozen waterfall and had to take to the timber. All the dogs were tired, and two of Vasha's mongrels were limping badly. By the time they made the portage around the fall, the sun was shining.

Steve paused on a knoll above a wide, clean stretch of lake, and waited for Wolfgang to catch up.

"Shall we go on?" Steve asked.

The German studied the lake a moment, then shook his head. "That would be a bad place to get trapped," he said. "A plane could strafe us out of existence. No, we will camp here until sunset."

There was little talk, and no argument. Everyone thought of rest, and even the trail-weary dogs forgot their hunger and curled up in their harnesses where they had halted, coiling their plumed tails over their noses for warmth. Wolfgang again refused to allow a fire, and so the travelers had to be content with brittle bannocks and cold pork. Laura took her eiderdown and a tarp, and rolled herself up in the lee of a dead pine log. The men found solace in their pipes.

Steve was asleep when the planes came again. He dreamed that he and Laura were sitting in the little farmhouse just outside of Ottawa, listening to her father tell, for the hundredth time, the story of the old North West Mounted in the early days of the Yukon. And as they listened to his words, they heard the drone of a plane. They raced to the door, and they could see the ship hurtling down towards them. Baron Wolfgang was at the controls, and Dagor was leering behind him. The plane went into a screaming dive, closer, closer. . . . He put his arm around Laura to protect her. The roar of the engines howled in

The pilot taxied to the edge of the lake directly below them.

his ears. . . . He opened his eyes. Wolfgang was kicking him. "Wake up, Patterson! Wake up, damn you!"

Steve sat up in his bag. Strangely, he could still hear the planes.

"They found our tracks!" fumed the Baron. "Up, everybody!"

Steve piled into his clothes and sprang to his feet. A Canadian Air Force two-seated trainer was circling approximately five hundred feet above them.

"Keep under the trees!" screamed the Baron. "They've followed our tracks, but they haven't located us yet." He barked an order in German. Vasha tore the tarp off his sled and opened the long box.

As Steve suspected, it contained rifles. The guns were handed out to the five fugitives. Strangely enough, Ernst was not given one of them. Laura came running over and stood by Austin who still lay huddled on the sled. Steve wanted to join them, but decided against it.

The plane circled once more, and then bore to the eastward. The five escapees exchanged triumphant glances and grinned like five well-trained monkeys, but Steve noticed that Baron Wolfgang

did not grin. He watched the plane until it passed over the fringe of trees, and then he followed its course by the sound of the engines.

They'll pick up our trail again and follow it, Steve reasoned. They'll see that it comes into this grove and doesn't come out. If they decide to lay a few eggs. . . .

Wolfgang turned suddenly, saw Steve, and tramped over. *This is it,* Steve thought. *Steady, boy, steady!*

Before the Baron could speak, the plane came back, lower this time. It seemed to skim over the tops of the pines, and suddenly the noise of the engine died. Steve met the Baron's stare.

"That is better than I hoped for," Wolfgang said. "The fools are going to land. Come with me!"

THEY ran to the crest of the hill, where the lake lay saucer-shaped below them. The plane, equipped with skis, was just settling on the clean, smooth surface of the snow.

Steve glanced over his shoulder. The other Germans had spread out fan-shaped among the trees. Wolfgang gave them an order in their own language, then to Steve he said: "This is excellent! We can use that aircraft."

Steve knew what he meant. The pilot had spun his craft and was taxiing to the edge of the lake almost directly below them.

"If you touch that plane, you're a bigger fool than I think you are," Steve told Wolfgang. "When that pilot decided to sit down, he undoubtedly radioed to the other aircraft in his squadron giving his position and reason for landing. If he doesn't report back, you'll have the whole Canadian Air Force back here within an hour."

From Wolfgang's scowl, Steve knew he had made his point. "If I had my own Messerschmitt, I should enjoy that," growled the Baron.

"Well, you haven't got it," Steve reminded him. "Now you've got just one alternative, and you'd better make up your mind in a hell of a hurry."

The pilot and his gunner were climbing out of the ship. They carried submachine guns as they advanced warily.

"They haven't a chance," said the Baron.

"Neither have you," warned Steve. "Listen—I don't want to be bombed to hell. Give yourself a break, Baron. They've seen our tracks, so they know somebody is here. But they don't know who! Let me take one team and go out to meet them. I'm still wearing Austin's uniform. They'll believe me, and we'll have a fighting chance for our lives!"

Wolfgang hesitated a moment, his icy gaze boring into Steve's eyes, as though searching for a sinister purpose behind the offer.

"Very good! Try it!" He snapped an order, and Vasha kicked the first team to their feet. "Get those fools out of here. Vasha goes with you. He's still carrying those hand-grenades, and one wrong word and the plane goes to hell! Also, I might remind you of the girl. . . ."

"You don't need to remind me of anything!" Steve growled. He thrust his feet into his snowshoes and ran down the trail to the lake. A moment later Vasha drove the dogs out of the grove and they jogged down to meet the flyers.

The latter waited on the level for him to come up. Steve still thought of himself as a young man, and so he was surprised at the youthfulness of the two flying officers. They seemed hardly more than kids.

They lowered their guns when they spotted his uniform breeches.

Steve waved genially. "Hello!" he shouted. "Lord, it's good to see you boys out here!" He tried to maintain his grin. "My name's Austin. R.C.M.P."

The youngsters grinned. The pilot introduced himself as Lieutenant Cox; his gunner was Sergeant Orr.

"You've certainly made good mileage, Corporal," laughed Cox. "We had an eye out for you. We were told you'd left the camp, but we didn't expect you this far west."

"Hell!" grinned the sergeant. "We sort of hoped we'd caught up with those Nazi blighters. From the track you left back there on the river, it looked like a whole gang."

Vasha had swung the team off the trail and was standing on the other side

of the sled, listening to every word.

Steve thought: *You fool kids don't know that you're standing on the brink of your own graves!*

"I was traveling at night," he said aloud. "See any sign of the Germans?"

"Not a bloody glimpse!" complained the pilot. "Can't figure out where they could have gone. But this is more in your line. Got any ideas?"

"It's logical to suppose they'd head south," Steve said. "Most of the fugitives have headed for the American border in the past."

"Then why," countered the sergeant, "are you heading north?"

Steve grinned ruefully. "The army patrols went south. I'm going to make a circle northeasterly and then bear south to Hearst and the railway."

"That's a hell of a long patrol. Well, anything we can report for you, Corporal?"

Steve glanced at the Austrian. "Not a thing," he said slowly. "As a matter of fact, I wish you wouldn't log it that you met up with me. My job's on the confidential side, and . . ." He paused significantly.

"We understand," the pilot said with a grin. "Good luck, old man, and cheerio!"

They both shook hands with Steve, and ran for their ship. Steve watched them taxi down the lake, waved when they waved, and stood there until the little trainer disappeared over the trees.

Vasha broke out laughing. "We give dem somet'ing to worry about. *Ja!*"

Steve swung on him so savagely the man stumbled backward into the snow.

"Shut your rotten mouth!" he snarled, and turned back toward the hill.

CHAPTER XI

NAZI NIGHTMARE

THE planes did not come again next day, nor the next, and on the third afternoon the little cavalcade worked to the top of a saddle-back, and there below them stretched the shimmering crescent of Little Loon Lake. Steve paused on the summit and waited for the others to catch up. There was no sign of any mine, or habitation; the place looked virginal, as though no man had ever set foot here before. The wind whipped playfully across the surface of the lake, twisting the powder snow into little cornucopias that went spinning ahead of it, like a boy rolling a hoop. And up here on the hill, a softer breeze hummed through the pines.

He had just time for a cigarette before the others struggled up. Wolfgang was arrogant with success.

"Keep behind the fringe of trees," he ordered. "I don't want a single track to mar the snow on that lake."

Trail dogs sense the end of a trek even in unfamiliar territory, and so there was no restraining them now. They plunged into the descent with reckless abandon, and it took every bit of craftsmanship and strength to keep the heavily loaded sleds from overturning. Steve dropped back and grasped the tail-line of Austin's sled. He kicked off his snowshoes so that his feet would sink deeper into the snow to help in the braking, and he let himself be dragged stiff-legged, jerking the sled from side to side, grabbing at bushes and small trees. Once he tripped and was dragged a good fifty feet before he was able to struggle back to his feet.

Vasha was not so successful. His clumsy sled sideswiped a small spruce, bounced sideways, and overturned in a tangled mass of cursing men and howling dogs. Wolfgang, with the lightest load, got down safely, and stamped back with Dagor to help untangle the mess. Steve had time for a brief word with Austin.

"This is the end of the trail, Jim," he told the constable. "What's the chance of you walking?"

"Damned slim. I'm all right from the waist up, but my leg's a mess."

Steve glanced back where Wolfgang was lashing the dogs into line and the other Germans were reloading the sled. They'd be back in a few minutes.

"There's no time now for explanations," Steve said grimly. "But I want you and Laura to figure out some way of getting clear when the time comes. If you head southeast from here, over

the hump, you'll eventually hit the Kapiskenogami River. About fifteen miles of tough going."

"But what's the idea? I don't savvy. . . ."

"Don't try to. For God's sake believe me, for once! You've got to get Laura out of this somehow."

"Why don't you get her out?"

Steve made a gesture of impatience. "I can't give you a map, because Wolfgang's got the only one in the party. But if you hit the river and follow southeasterly, you'll cross the railroad."

Austin shook his head. "No dice, Steve. She'd be better off alone than with me."

"Damn it! Try to understand! Ah, hell! Here's Wolfgang coming back. Remember, work it out somehow with Laura. Be ready to run for it when I give you the green light!"

Baron Wolfgang came up grinning—if his cold baring of teeth could be called a grin.

"You shall be surprised at the commodious quarters awaiting us," he told them. "A small sample of *Der Fuehrer's* genius for planning."

They skirted the lake on the level and traversed the shorter, inside arc of the crescent, and within the hour passed through a gap into a small cul-de-sac surrounded by hills. It was a *U*-shaped pocket, about two hundred yards in length and half as wide, opening onto the lake itself. A land patrol might well pass within a few hundred feet and not see it. The small trees were so thick along the rim they formed an almost solid wall, and Steve knew intuitively they had been planted, perhaps four years previously. It was perfect—almost too perfect—and Steve reflected bitterly that in all his years of bush travel, he had never stumbled onto a more ideal setting for a natural hideaway.

The snow had drifted deep against the base of the hill, and at first they could see no opening. Wolfgang walked into the center of the clearing and took a small surveyor's compass from his pocket. After orienting himself, he measured off about twenty paces from a large boulder near the high-water level of the lake shore, then scrambled forward and started digging and scraping the snow away. Eventually the timbered front of some old mine workings were uncovered. A few moments later, a huge door was dragged open.

With a curt word of warning to the others, Wolfgang and Dagor disappeared inside.

STEVE saw Jim and Laura in earnest conversation, but he avoided joining them. Ernst regarded the place with a mixture of curiosity and apprehension on his face. There was no use for Steve to speculate on what was coming. It was bound to be bad. He, too, felt a certain curiosity about this base, but his apprehension had worn itself into a bitter fatalism. How could a thing like this happen? What Canadian had dreamed, in the pleasant days of peace, that the farsighted Nazis were even then planting their outposts in the very core of the American continent? Even the legendary Trojan Horse had not been moved inside the city's defenses until the war had started. The realization of what this portended forced Steve to think of the wild hinterlands of South and Central America. And of the vast unpopulated spaces of the United States. Who but the Germans would have the cunning, the patience, the ruthlessness, to conceive such a diabolical adventure?

That Wolfgang had let him live to learn of the base was significant. But he would not be allowed to utilize that knowledge. His value to them was over; he had guided them this far. That, he could see now, had been a mistake. Perhaps they could have made it alone, perhaps not. He had gambled and lost. Now it was time to cash in the chips. Steve winced, and tried not to think that far ahead.

He heard the *pocketty-pok-pok-pok* of a gasoline engine starting, then the hum of a generator, and lights began to wink alive inside the cavern. The smell of burning wood drifted through the opening, and Wolfgang reappeared. He swaggered over to the others like a ham actor in an old Viennese musical comedy.

"I will show you to your suites," he

said archly. "A little damp, to be sure, but you will understand. The mine has not been occupied for some years."

Steve followed him inside. The place was fabulous. The central cavern was dimly lighted, but in the vague, uncertain shadows, Steve could distinguish giant packing cases, piled on top of each other. Wolfgang laughed.

"Don't be impatient, Patterson," he sneered. "Tomorrow I'll show you the whole thing. Then, if you're honest, you'll admit that no stupid Britisher or blow-hard American could have arranged such a lay-out."

"I'm ready to admit that now," Steve said grimly. "We've been mighty damn stupid to let you get away with it."

"Trusting souls, you North Americans," went on the Baron. "But wait—you have seen nothing. You shall be the first and only one of your breed to see one of our bases. I will give you a personally escorted tour. You see, I am rather proud of this. Without our magnificent *Fuehrer*, it would have been impossible, of course, but I had no small part in the conception and carrying out of the scheme. It was a long and costly job to locate such an ideal spot and fly in this equipment. But what a cheap price to pay for the results we shall get."

Wolfgang laughed. "What fools you Canadians are!" He waved airily at the massive crates. "Those boxes contain a complete bomber, engines, and spare parts. Also some bomb assemblies. They were freighted in by plane from the States. Did your foolish, simple-minded customs officers examine them? No. We merely painted the words *Mining Machinery* on the outside and filled out a childish affidavit to swear that was what they contained. Such trusting idiots are not fit to possess such a rich land, while eighty million superior peoples are squeezed into European Germany."

Steve shrugged. To try and explain such things as honor and trust to a Nazi was a waste of words. Yet even to himself the old words had a banal ring. The English-speaking peoples had become fat and placid, like a well-fed old barnyard cow munching its cud, while the wolves tore down the fences. God knows they had been warned! Smug fools, Steve reflected bitterly. When the wolves howled, and we thought it was the prattle of harmless puppies.

He was glad to be alone when Wolfgang ushered him into a small, cell-like room.

"You will not attempt to leave these quarters," warned the Baron. "I don't wish you shot until I have shown you around. Vasha will bring your bedroll. Meanwhile, pleasant dreams."

THE work started with the dawn. Even before Steve was let out of his hole, he could hear the Germans ripping open the big crates, shoveling the snow off the floor of the cul-de-sac, dragging machinery into position. He was seated moodily on his camp cot when the squaw brought his breakfast.

She put it down sullenly and started out without speaking. Puzzled, he was on the verge of addressing her in her own tongue, when he saw the shadow of a man stretched across the floor outside the open door. Steve took the hint and said nothing.

When he had finished the meal, Dagor came in with the information that Wolfgang wanted to see him at once. Steve followed him out. As they walked down a long tunnel Steve wondered if this was a "last mile" sort of expedition. His usefulness was over now that he had guided them to this rendezvous. To permit him to live now would be to incur a needless risk, which would be contrary to the much-vaunted Nazi efficiency.

Yet, when he was ushered finally into the Baron's presence, he had a flash of intuition. Wolfgang was lolling in a comfortable chair before a warm fire. All his childish arrogance had flowered until he fairly radiated an over-weaning pomposity. This base was his baby! He wanted flattery and adulation. And he couldn't get it from his subordinates because he wouldn't stoop to fraternize with inferiors.

Steve Patterson had learned a good deal about Wolfgang during that long trek through the forests. Now he took his cue from the Baron's satisfied smirk.

"Did you sleep well?" Wolfgang asked.

"Not so well," Steve admitted ruefully. "I was haunted by the things you told me last night."

"Then you are surprised?"

"Bewildered would be more accurate," Steve said. "I still can't believe it. How such a plan could have been conceived and executed right under our noses is beyond comprehension."

The Baron was obviously pleased. "You have seen nothing yet?" he expanded. "Come—I will personally prove to you our Germanic superiority." He clapped his hands and Vasha came scuttling out of an adjoining room with his fur coat and pistol belt.

The tour was an eye-opener to Steve Patterson. In the great central cavern, two of the escaped mechanics were tearing open the crates while another was removing the thick layer of grease that had protected the machine parts against rust during their long storage in the wilderness. Outside, the others were stretching a fine wire net across a portion of the cul-de-sac, and carefully covering it with light fir boughs.

"A most effective camouflage," the Baron explained with pride, "for the assemblage of our aircraft."

Steve forced himself to laugh. "You haven't overlooked a single thing," he agreed.

"But wait!" said Wolfgang. "This is only the beginning."

They went back into the mine. At the rear was a well-equipped machine shop. Dagor was already testing out a large turret lathe. There was a milling machine, a large drill press, a small tool lathe, and various portable power tools. Adjoining the shop was the power-plant.

"I must have passed within a comparatively few miles of here many times," Steve exclaimed. "I never dreamed that one of these old mines housed a modern industrial plant!"

The Baron crowed with laughter. "You have expressed it, my friend—*you never dreamed!* That is precisely the trouble with you Britishers—you never dream."

Steve felt his anger rising; he wanted to say the Anglo-Saxon peoples dreamed all right, but they dreamed of peace, of prosperity, of the rights of man. Instead, he just shook his head as though awed completely by what he was seeing.

"You're too complicated for me," he said, grinning. "I can see the brilliance of caching this plane here so that your more important men who happened to be taken prisoner could escape, but—"

"*Escape?*" jeered the Baron. "You don't think for one minute a Nazi officer will run from these stupid Canadians! Bah! Come—I will show you something more!"

HE LED the way back into his own quarters, and on into a rear chamber. Here was a short-wave receiver and broadcasting outfit. On a table against one wall, a large-scale detailed chart was laid out. Wolfgang beckoned Steve over to the table and watched his expression.

Steve Patterson whistled softly. It was a chart of Sault Ste. Marie. The locks of the Soo Canal were plainly marked in red.

"So it's only escape you think we are concerned with?" chuckled Wolfgang. "You fool. You unimaginative fool, Patterson! If you have an enemy asleep, his eyes shut and his jugular exposed, and a sharp razor in your hand—would you think only of escape?"

Steve felt the blood mount to his cheeks. "I guess not," he admitted.

Wolfgang tapped his fingers on the chart. "These locks of the Soo Canal at Sault Ste. Marie are one of your most vulnerable spots; the artery through which flows the very life blood of your continent. I wonder, Patterson, how much even you—a Canadian—know about your great canal?" He paused expectantly.

Not wanting to irritate him at this juncture, Steve forced a bitter smile. "Well, I know it's the gateway from Lake Superior into Lake Huron and the east, through which grain and iron ore from the west are transported. If that's what you mean."

"Bah! Any school boy knows that! In your smug complacency, you North Americans do not have sense enough to take cognizance of what you already have. But we Nazis know, for we have studied your countries for years. Any

child in Germany, since our noble *Fuehrer* came to guide us, knows that the Soo Canal carries more tonnage than the Panama and the Suez canals combined. We know that the great western prairies send their grain over Lake Superior, the largest fresh water lake in the world; that millions of tons of iron ore pass through the Soo to feed your eastern steel mills. Do you wonder then, that we laid our plans long ago to rid ourselves of this menace? Why, you fool! When we wreck the Soo, your whole transportation system will be dislocated; your mills will lie idle, your blast furnaces grow cold, for you haven't the freight cars to handle the traffic. How long can you and your allies last without steel and without bread?"

Steve knew his face had gone white, but he did not trust his voice. So that was the Nazi dream. It was a nightmare!

Wolfgang laughed nastily, and waved his hand at the radio across the room.

"Nightly our agents keep us advised on these matters," he boasted. "I can tell you exactly how many ships are now waiting in Superior for the ice-breakers to hammer a way through the ice so they can get into the locks. We will wait a few days, for it is still only early April, until we can get these freighters huddled together in a convenient little knot for our bombs at the mouth of the canal. Oh, I tell you, Patterson, our *Fuehrer* has developed the greatest espionage system the world has ever seen. Tell me —do you think you dull Canadians or those bombastic Americans are as well informed on what Germany is doing?"

Steve shrugged. "I don't suppose so," he admitted. "It's not our way to try and steal what belongs to someone else."

The Baron was not offended. "You should study history, Patterson. In your greedy commercialism you have forgotten the laws of nature, of self-preservation. Arrogance and foolish nationalism without the strength to support it is race suicide. So has it always been since the dawn of time. What happened to the great nations of history? They were born of the sword, taking what they wanted from defenseless tribes and peoples. They worked hard to prosper, then came the era of smugness and indolence. They grew fat, greedy, and they laid aside the sword to grasp more and more until they became too slothful to defend themselves against a more virile, hungry, younger nation. Realism died before idealism; they became feminized, pacifists, soft. Words took the place of deeds. Is that not so?"

"In part, I suppose history bears out your cynicisms, Baron."

"*Ja!* From a Britisher, that is almost a compliment! Did you know that those stupid sheep in Congress passed a law forbidding American secret agents from operating outside their own continent? It is unbelievable! We have had such an easy time of it it has been without zest. Democracy, bah! No unity, either between your allies, or even your own countrymen. Our agitators and provocateurs have sown distrust between your religious groups, your racial groups, between employer and employee. We have fostered the suspicions between the Americans and the British, between the English and the dominions."

"You have overlooked one point," Steve said slowly. "I grant you the Anglo-Saxon is a little slow to get underway, but he's just as slow in quitting."

Wolfgang sneered and from a large drawer beneath the table, drew another chart—a small-scale map of North America.

"He will not have a chance to quit—we will arrange that for him. This base is only a beginning. With this fast bomber, faster than anything you have on the continent, despite your boasting, we will capture your own aircraft and turn them against you. We have many Nazi pilots planted here in the camps. From this little womb which we have created here in the wilderness will be born another child of the *luftwaffe*. After we have obliterated the Soo canal, there will be the great factories of Detroit, Buffalo, Pittsburgh—all open, unprotected! And look—" He ran his finger down from Alaska along the inside of the Rocky Mountain chain. "While the naive Americans set up their silly guns along the west coast, our valiant Japanese allies will sweep southward down this plateau, from Alaska, through your

western provinces of Canada, down into those stupid mid-western states who spoke so glibly of isolation! Oh, they will be isolated, all right! Isolated from each other and from the two coasts. Bah! How could such fools have survived this long? That is the mystery!" He slammed the chart into the drawer in a burst of impatience.

The Baron was undergoing a veritable paroxysm of emotion begot by his own eloquence, and Steve wanted desperately to get away. He felt sick as the full import of the things he had seen and heard began to take form in his mind. Wolfgang's own metaphor most aptly described it—the Nazis held a sharpened razor poised against the jugular of an unsuspecting continent!

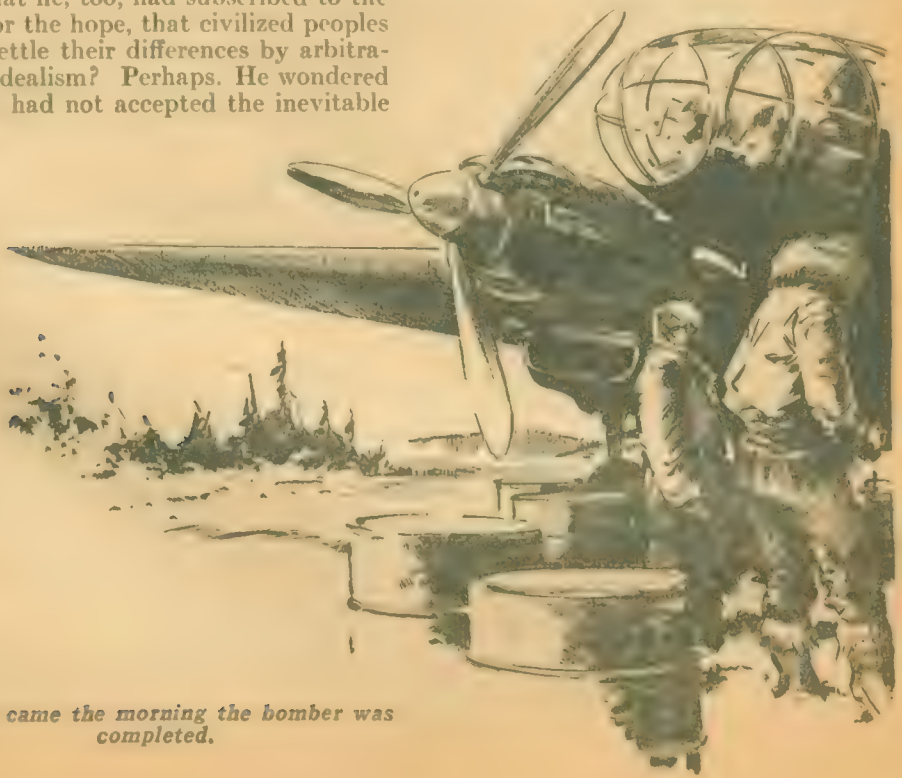
When the Baron finally dismissed him, he was glad to get back to his own quarters. He threw himself on the cot and tried to collect his wits. Tragically, there was a certain ghastly logic to the Baron's reasoning insofar as it related to the complacency of the Canadians and the Americans. Steve remembered with a pang that he, too, had subscribed to the belief, or the hope, that civilized peoples could settle their differences by arbitration. Idealism? Perhaps. He wondered why he had not accepted the inevitable lessons of history. But if it was too late for recrimination, it was not yet time to take it lying down. That, he told himself, was the weakness in the Germans' cold-blooded reasoning. By their mathematical calculations, London should have fallen. But London did not fall. Now Wolfgang reasoned that the Soo Canal was as good as obliterated already. Steve's jaw tightened. The gun was cocked, it was true, but the Soo still stood, waiting only for the ice to break up.

Steve took a quiet vow. If he had anything to do about it, Baron Wolfgang would never trip the trigger on his bomb plot.

CHAPTER XII

5,000 TROJAN HORSES

STEVE watched as the work proceeded on the bomber, with a heavy heart. It progressed rapidly, for the ship had already been tested and flown before it had been



Finally came the morning the bomber was completed.

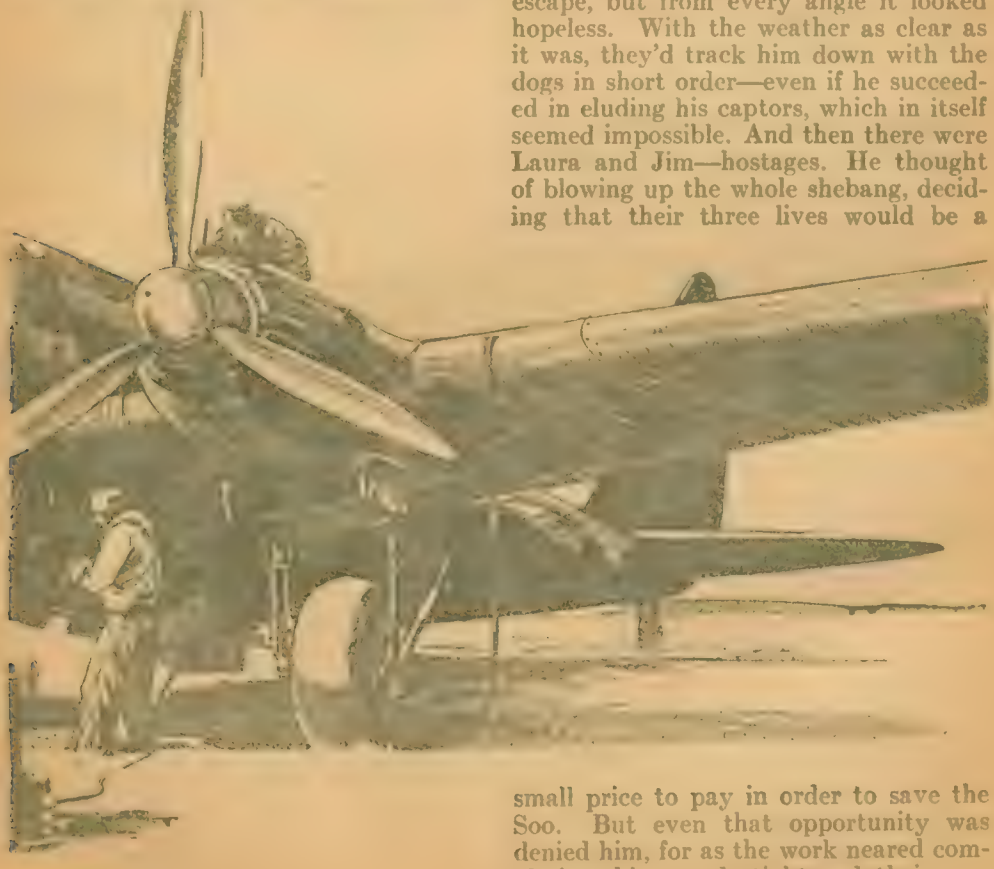
cleverly taken apart in sections for transportation. Now it was a simple matter of assembly. Despite his depression, Steve was forced to concede that the plan was brilliantly executed. No detail had been overlooked. As the huge metal monster took form, he saw that the topside of the fuselage had been painted a flat white, marked with green splotches so that from the air it would blend quietly with the snow and the fir trees. The under-section was a dull, powder-black, perfect for night-flying. The Nazis had calculated the time of year, even the time of day, the bomber would be used. It was twin-engined, each engine capable of revving up—as Wolfgang boasted—twenty-five hundred horse-power.

Five thousand little Trojan Horses!

Even the weather favored the Nazis. For days the sky was overcast, which protected them from any stray air patrol that might have wandered over, but the storm that Steve sensed was building in the northwest, held back. Steve had prayed the storm would come and delay the work, and Wolfgang hovered over the radio, cursing the authorities who had barred weather broadcasts.

Steve saw little of Laura—just an occasional glimpse now and then — and nothing whatever of Jim Austin. Whenever Steve was not with Wolfgang, either Dagor or Vasha dogged his heels. Once he asked Dagor about the big constable but the Nazi bombardier only smirked and asked what difference it made how he was. He saw Ernst frequently, but never alone. The agent had been put to work on small tasks; cleaning engine parts, painting, rearranging the camouflage.

Steve mulled over the possibility of escape, but from every angle it looked hopeless. With the weather as clear as it was, they'd track him down with the dogs in short order—even if he succeeded in eluding his captors, which in itself seemed impossible. And then there were Laura and Jim—hostages. He thought of blowing up the whole shebang, deciding that their three lives would be a



small price to pay in order to save the Soo. But even that opportunity was denied him, for as the work neared completion, his guards tightened their surveillance.

Alice the squaw brought his meals. Although she did not speak to him, she had fallen into the habit of mumbling to herself. Steve wanted to ask her about Laura, but with either Dagor or Vasha always within ear-shot, he had to let her come and go in silence. Wolfgang continuously demanded his presence as a one-man audience for his boastful strutting, and Steve thought it prudent to comply. He knew that his hours were numbered now. Wolfgang had arranged things with diabolic Teutonic thoroughness; even Luck had gone against Steve. He remembered the candid camera shots Colonel Baldwin had taken of him and Vasha. For his kid, the officer had said. Well, the kid would be surprised at what he had. It was just part of the web, part of the Patterson luck.

The storm still held back, and finally came the morning the bomber was completed. Wolfgang took Steve out and together they watched the men tear down the net. It was needed no longer, for now the big white and green aircraft was in itself sufficiently camouflaged.

I'm in the same category as that damned net, Steve reflected bitterly. *My usefulness is over.*

The Baron was bursting with pride. "There she sits!" he chortled. "Think of it, Patterson! Right here in the middle of Canada, ready to strike a blow for our *Fuehrer! Heil* Hitler!" He threw up his right hand in ecstasy. "Tonight I shall test it!" He grinned at Steve's somber face. "I am almost tempted to take you for a test flight, so that you can see for yourself the superiority of our aircraft. Look at those engines! Twenty-five hundred horse-power apiece! Come, let me show you inside. You shall be the first Britisher to see the secrets which will destroy you!"

He barked an order in German, and two of the mechanics drew guns and lined themselves behind Steve. In this manner they climbed into the plane.

While Steve Patterson was no pilot, he had fooled around with light planes enough to solo, so he could appreciate the compactness and efficiency of the German bomber. Steve recognized the familiar lines of a German medium bomber with a few startling exceptions. For instance, it was equipped with air brakes making it suitable for either high altitude or dive bombing. The long fuselage was roughly divided by light-weight bulkheads into three compartments. The pilots were perched in the glass-enclosed snout, the radio operator and the bombardier in the next division, and the machine-gunner who covered the rear in the last compartment. She was racked to carry a heavy load of bombs.

The Baron was almost child-like in his pride. He stretched out on the floor above the bombardier's window and demonstrated the bomb sight. As he went through the motions of tripping the bomb release, he put Steve in mind of a hangman amusing himself with an empty gallows.

"It will be so simple!" crowed the Nazi. "At dawn I will swoop in low over the freighters huddled in the lake at the mouth of the locks. As they pass over the cross-hairs of the sight, my bombardier will trip the handle . . . so . . . and before the egg lands, we will be over the locks. Then *ein . . . swei . . . drei!* We cannot miss but I will turn, dive, and come back low, unless the swine are not too panicked to try some shooting. One, two, three . . . again! Blooey! It is over. *Ja!*"

Steve turned and walked out of the ship. With a laugh, Wolfgang followed.

Steve glared reproachfully at the sky. Gray and bleak. And then his ears caught a soft sighing among the trees. He looked closely toward the rim. The young spruce were gently shaking the snow from their boughs. Somewhere off among the willows near the lake, a sled dog howled dismally. In the distance, a wolf answered, and the dogs whimpered and were silent. Steve felt a little better.

THE squaw was just bringing in his noon meal—and Dagor, as usual was behind her in the doorway—when the big engines burst into song. Steve jumped instinctively, then as he saw Dagor's leer of triumph, he settled back on his cot and pushed the food away. Still mumbling, the squaw moved it back in front of him, and abruptly Steve became con-

scious that her muttering was intended for him.

"Eat brother," she said in Cree dialect. "You have need of great strength for what is to come. Tonight, the one who is like the wolverine is to listen to the voice that comes out of a box. Your door will not be locked. When you hear the wolf howl, go quickly to the room near the cave mouth."

"They fly the big bird tonight," Steve answered in Cree.

"Not tonight, brother. The Great Spirit is angry! He has sent the big winds."

The engines had steadied into a continuous drone. Steve saw that Dagor was watching them. He wanted to ask about Laura, about Jim, but held back.

Alice mumbled, "*When the wolf howls!*" and waddled away still muttering to herself.

The storm struck hard! It drove the light out of the sky, it screamed through the trees, and it hurled the wood-smoke back down the chimneys into the cave. In a rage that matched the temper of the storm, Wolfgang ordered his men out to lash the bomber to stakes, although the cul-de-sac itself was a protection against the full force of the wind. But there would be no flying this night, for even a dog could not have stood against the wind on the wild, open surface of the lake. Steve offered up a little prayer of thanks, yet he wished the storm was not quite so violent. At this rate, it would soon blow itself out.

Steve waited impatiently for the squaw to bring his dinner. To his abysmal despair, it was Vasha who came in with the food. There was a knowing smirk on the dark face of the Austrian that Steve didn't like. He weighed his chances of overcoming the man; it was the best chance he had had to date. Yet even as he braced himself for action, some hunch restrained him. It was well he did, for a moment later, two of the German mechanics walked past the open doorway, hauling a brace of large bomb shells on a hand truck.

It was only because he recalled the squaw's admonition to eat for strength that he was able to get the food down at all. Even then, he could not touch the bannocks, although they were fresh and warm.

Later, he was shaking out a little tobacco into a cigarette paper, when he heard the lonely wail of a wolf nearby. For several nights of late he had heard a wolf howl, so he was about to ignore it, when once again he remembered Alcie's warning: *When the wolf howls!*

He tossed the half-made cigarette aside and grabbed his parka. As the squaw had promised, the door was unlocked. Steve padded back to his cot and made a dummy out of his fur coat to stuff into the sleeping bag, then he recrossed the cell and eased cautiously into the corridor.

Far back in the cavern, he could hear the squawking of the radio. A light burned in the machine-shop, and the shadows of the men inside danced on the walls. Loading the bombs, he thought grimly. He turned, then, and padded toward the mouth.

He found the last door and eased it open. Laura and Jim were there. They watched him warily as he sidled into the room and closed the door. He thought she looked a little like her father, old Sergeant Mac, now; her back was straight, and her large black eyes appraised him frankly. He wondered if she still thought him a traitor. Beating back the impulse to take her in his arms, he turned to Austin. The wounded man lay propped up on his berth.

"How's the leg, Jim?" It sounded banal, conventional, but for the life of him, Steve couldn't think of anything else to say.

Austin sniffed. "Skip that!" he growled. "What do you know about this guy Ernst?"

Steve flushed. "He's a double-crossing rat, in addition to being a Nazi! He'd cut his mother's throat to save his own hide."

"That's swell!" Austin said. "He's arranging to get you out of here!"

"Ernst?"

Austin nodded. "He's due here now. You've got to reason with Laura—"

"I'm not going to leave without Jim," the girl interrupted flatly. "There's no use arguing . . ." She stopped abruptly, and her hand flew to her throat.

STEVE swung around just as Ernst insinuated himself into the room. The agent looked bad. There were hollows of worry beneath his pale eyes, and his face had warped into a peaked tautness that made him resemble, more than ever before, the predatory character that he was.

He stopped just inside the room with his back to the door. His eyes sought Steve's.

"They told you?" he asked huskily.

Steve scowled. "You want us to run for it, so you can shoot us in the back. Is that it, Ernst?"

The German gave him a hollow smile. "You know better than that, Patterson," he reproved. "I told you once I think of everything."

"Principally yourself."

"Entirely myself," Ernst agreed. "I also told you that he who assures my safety is my friend, that he who endangers it, my enemy. Conditions have changed. I want to deal with you."

"I've made one too many deals with you, Ernst!"

"Easy, my friend, easy," warned the German. He cocked his head, listening. Satisfied they were not overheard, he went on in his persuasive, yet mocking voice. "As you may be aware, it is the Nazi theory to remove the weak, the crippled, and the useless. An efficient practice, no doubt, but at the moment, inconvenient since I come under the classification of 'useless.' The Baron just received a radio message disguised as a stock report, that ice-breakers are trying to cut a way through the ice to force an early opening to the canal to speed up war shipments. His plans have therefore matured. The bomber leaves for action the moment the weather clears. Wolfgang, unfortunately, no longer trusts me completely. Do you get the point?"

Austin grunted disgustedly. "What he's getting around to, Steve, is that we're all scheduled to be rubbed out, Ernst included."

"Crude, but accurate," agreed the German agent. "Since I don't know my way through these damned woods alone, I must include you in my plans, Patterson. There is, however, one condition."

"The condition being . . .?"

Ernst smiled. "We're back where we started from. You give me your word you'll get me across the border, and forget my part in this—er—arrangement here."

Steve caught Laura's look. "What will you contribute, Ernst?"

"I took the trouble to poison all the dogs except the team I bought from old MacGillivray. I have food and bedding for the three of us—"

"Three? There's four of us!"

"Oh, for God's sake, Steve, don't be heroic!" snapped Austin. "I can't walk, and you'd never get away with me on a sled."

"Precisely," agreed the agent. "I have—"

"No dice," Steve said flatly. "We all go, or we all stay."

Austin sat up angrily. "Ernst has told us about his deal with you, Steve. I don't know what sort of an idea you had but—"

Steve glanced obliquely at the agent. "You might as well all know," he said grimly. "I was working with Inspector Barnett!"

Laura gave a little whimper. "Oh, Steve!"

Ernst smiled cynically. "I'm afraid I rather spoiled that, Patterson."

"You did," Steve told him bluntly. "And if I ever got you out of this alive, I'd make sure you hanged for what happened to Barnett."

The agent spread his hands. "That's a chance I'm willing to take—if you get me out of this alive."

"I'm glad to know you were working with Barnett, Steve," Austin said after a long pause. "It makes what's coming easier." He sank back on the bed. "Now get the hell out of here! You've a duty to do, Steve. If you can stop that plane in time. . . ."

Steve hesitated. He looked from Jim to Laura, and back to Jim. There was so little to be said. This was no longer a personal thing. This little cul-de-sac in the heart of the great woods country, had suddenly become a battle front.

Ernst said: "Come along, Patterson. We've a long haul through the storm to

safety. If Baron Wolfgang decides. . . ."

Steve was watching him when the door swung open. There wasn't time to shout a warning. Dagor brought the heavy barrel of his revolver down squarely on the agent's head. They all heard the peculiar crunch of breaking bone. Ernst died before he hit the floor.

UNDER the threat of Dagor's revolver, nobody moved. As Ernst had died, so died their hopes. The reaction was paralyzing. It was not the first time Steve Patterson had seen a man die, yet this was so sudden, he couldn't take his eyes off the limp body of the Nazi agent who, but a moment before, had held out a slender cord of hope. With a peculiar fascination, he watched the blood seep in an ever-widening circle from the agent's broken skull. He felt no personal sympathy for the Nazi—at best he was a spy and a traitor to his own side—but he was swept with a universal compassion for mankind as a whole, forced to beat and kill and maim to satisfy the political and economic ambitions of the few.

Even Dagor seemed a little startled at the position in which he found himself. He stood just inside the open doorway, holding them back with his gun, trying to decide what he should do. The radio was squawking noisily at the other end of the mine, as Wolfgang tried to pick his reports out of the static; and in the machine-shop, the mechanics were banging away at their work. Outside, the storm swept over the hill, and little gusts of wind jeered down the chimneys.

Defying the gun, Laura moved across the room and stood beside Steve. Nothing that had ever happened to him before had pleased him so much. That simple gesture of her faith in him and all the things he had tried to do overwhelmed him. He glanced down, and her courageous smile made him ashamed of his own despair. Austin's eyes were cold and calculating. Steve managed a wry grin, and turned back to the German.

"O.K., sucker," he growled. "Call your master. But take a good long look at that guy you just murdered. Dagor. Someday soon you'll look like that, after one of my countrymen splits that thick skull of yours."

The Nazi swelled his chest like a gorilla. *"Verfluchte!"* he snarled.

"Nuts!" jeered Steve.

Laura rested a hand on his arm. "Don't, Steve!" She gave a little sob. "Oh, I'm so proud of you! No matter what happens now—I know you're fine, and good, and—and—true!"

Steve started to turn his head, when he glimpsed a shadow beyond the door. Suddenly the squaw's tremendous bulk loomed in the opening. In her fat, leathery hands, she held a rabbit snare made of piano wire. Dagor must have heard her movement, perhaps he merely sensed her presence, but he seemed about to turn, when Steve pushed Laura aside and took a half-step forward.

The diversion was enough. Dagor swung his gun and instinctively backed up to brace himself. The squaw looped the wire over his head and jerked it.

Laura gasped and Steve swung in front of her to blot out the horror. When he heard the thump of a falling body, he pushed the girl toward Austin, and turned.

Alice, with perfect stoicism, put her heavy foot on Dagor's body and pressed against his heart, as the Indians do to stop life in a stunned animal. But the precaution was unnecessary; Dagor was dead. She loosened her wire and took it off the man's neck, as though he were a snowshoe rabbit, and carefully coiled it. Steve picked up an empty sack and covered Dagor's contorted features.

"My sister," Steve said in Cree, "I thank you in the name of the Great White Father across the sea. You shall be rewarded. . . ."

Alice gave him an indifferent glance. "My brother, I need no thanks for trapping a lynx. This is not the time for talk. We go now. Follow me."

Steve took the rebuke in silence. Then he turned to Austin, who waved him away.

"Get going," the constable growled. "Just toss me that damn German's gun, and I'll have the pleasure of getting. . . ."

"Oh, for God's sake!" snapped Steve. "Shut up!" He stuck Dagor's gun in his

Vasha would never move again.

belt, crossed to the cot, grabbed Austin's arm and heaved him over his shoulder. Staggering under the load, he stumbled after Laura and the squaw.

Vasha was seated on a box near the door, his Winchester across his knees. His head leaned quietly against a timber. Alice passed him without a glance. Vasha did not move. Steve took another look at the man. Vasha would never move again.

CHAPTER XIII

FIVE OF A KIND

OUT on the lake the main body of the storm marched in its wrath, and in the cul-de-sac, a squadron of wind pounced on the scurrying fugitives with screams of delight. As Steve waded through the drifts, he glimpsed the dark bulk of the bomber, rocking at its mooring, like a wave-tossed schooner. Once he stumbled, and Austin groaned in pain.

"Put me down, Steve!" he pleaded. "You can't make it with me!"

"Shut up!" Steve panted. "Cover your face before you freeze."

The barrage of the wind whipped up blinding whirlpools of loose snow so that Steve could see only a few feet ahead. Already Alice was out of sight, but he set his feet in Laura's tracks, and staggered toward the protection of the trees.

Once the gap was reached, they had a moment's respite from the fury of the blizzard. Steve sagged against the hillside and rested. Alice padded back and looked at them closely. In the darkness, she loomed like a big black bear.

"You wait," she said in English. "Alice come back quick."

As she vanished into the night, Laura came over and pressed close to Steve.

"Afraid, honey?" He grinned at her.

She laughed. "Afraid? No, Steve, I'm not afraid of anything now! The only thing I feared before was. . . ."

"Was that I had gone over to the Nazis?"

"I guess that was it. But I never *really* believed it, Steve. Even when all the evidence made it seem that way—I, well, way down deep—"

She stopped abruptly as the squaw drove a dog team into the gap and jerked the sled around by sheer strength. As Ernst had promised, it was already loaded for travel. Steve shook his head. The five little Siberians had all they could haul already. He gently lowered Austin to the ground, then straightened.

"We'll have to dump some of that stuff," he told the squaw. "Throw off half the food—anything else we don't actually need. We'll have to travel fast and light."

"Look, you damned fool!" protested Austin. "You can't. . . ."

"If I hear any more from you, s'help me, Jim, I'll slug you. Now shut up!" Steve barked.

Ignoring Austin's angry arguments they cleared the sled, keeping as few supplies as possible. Steve made a bed by stuffing three sleeping bags, one in the other, and then he trussed the protesting constable inside and tied him onto the sled. While he was doing this, Steve made his decision. He knew what he had to do, and there must be no argument about it.

Austin was still growling. "You know damn well these five little dogs can't pull this load any distance!" he protested.

"If you had that big half-wolf. . . ."

"Well, we haven't!"

But Steve couldn't help thinking about Emperor, and what it would mean to their chances. The great lead dog would throw his mighty shoulders into his harness with a power nearly equal to the other five.

"We go now," ordered the squaw. "Me beat trail!"

She had brought snowshoes for them, and as Steve and Laura squirmed their moccasins into the thongs, Alice lurched off into the woods. Steve walked along the team, patting each dog, whispering a word of encouragement; and then he looped a long line from the *peeto* at the front of the sled, and took his place ahead of the dogs.

Laura broke the sled clear with a jerk. Steve shouted, "w-HEAT, w-HEAT!" and heaved his weight against the line.

Once he got them out of the hills onto the river would be time enough, he assured himself. It might be tougher then, but he'd find a way. If he explained his plan now, Laura would argue, then maybe none of them would escape. He closed his mind against the parting, and tried to take as much weight off the dogs as possible.

But as Steve struggled up the slope beyond the woods, he knew in his heart they'd never make it like this. Without his help, the five small dogs would not be able to drag Austin and the sled through the fresh-drifting snow. Perhaps if he stayed in harness himself, they might have a chance. But he could not continue much further; he had a job to do—even if they all perished.

STEVE was thinking of these things when he heard the howl of a wolf. That eery call invariably brought the hackles erect on his nape as it had on all men since time immemorial. There was triumph and defiance in that wild challenge of the forest corsair, reminding Steve that four centuries of civilization had failed to quell the spirit of the wilderness.

He heard the crunch of snowshoes and looked up to see the squaw lurching back along the trail. Steve stopped so abruptly that the dogs behind crowded around him in confusion. Then they lent their howls to the chorus!

"Put me down, Steve," Austin pleaded.

The squaw was leading a massive wolf-dog by a short leash!

Steve sobbed, "Emperor!" and dropped to his knees as the great brute broke away and sprang at him.

With his arms around the big fellow, he stared up at Alice. For the first time, he heard her thick laughter.

"Do not disbelieve your eyes, my brother," she said happily. "It is the half-wild one himself."

"But how. . . .?"

"That evil man does not understand the creatures of the forest," she explained. "He thinks everything must bow to his will, even death. When this dog fell under his blows, I seized him and threw him into the bush, knowing he was but stunned. Then every day, I left a little food behind. One day I went back, and he was eating the food. So I tied him in the woods, far from harm."

Steve wiped his eyes and stood up. "My sister, you make me ashamed," he said huskily. "In you rests the spirit of

Canada. I can say no more than that."

"Your words are good, brother. Now if you put that dog in his place, we will go." She started to turn away, when Steve called her again.

"Wait," he said. "I need your help. Our little white sister must break the trail."

"She does not know the way."

"She must do it," Steve insisted. "You forget that she is a child of the woods. She knows that the limbs grow short on the north side of the trees, as well as you."

"Forgive me, brother. I am the one who is now ashamed."

Laura came up as he harnessed Emperor at the head of the team. "But, Steve, surely Alice is more capable—"

"We must go very fast, Laura," Steve said firmly. "I need her strength back here. Don't argue, please. Just keep heading southeast. By morning we should reach the Kapiskenogami, then we'll swing south to the railroad." He stood up and seized her roughly. "Don't fail me, my dear!"

She surrendered to his kiss, but he knew she was surprised. When he let her go, she turned quickly and ran down the trail.

"Keep as far ahead as possible!" he shouted after her. "We'll come fast now that old Emperor's where he belongs."

After she had passed out of sight in the darkness, he turned back to the sled. Austin and the squaw watched him so intently he wondered if they guessed his plan.

"I'm going back, Jim," he told the wounded man.

Austin swore softly under his breath. "Perhaps we could make it together, Steve," he said after a pause. "Then we could send off a batch of fighting planes and . . ." He stopped, conscious of the weakness in his own argument.

"That's no dice," Steve said flatly. "With the very best of luck, it would take us days to reach the railroad. This storm will blow itself out by tomorrow. The thaw has come, Jim, and the whole Nazi strategy of this plot is based on that. This storm is the last dying gasp of winter. The locks of the Soo Canal will open in a day or two. The area will be jammed with freighters waiting their turn to lock through. Wolfgang is counting on that."

Austin shook off his mitten, offered his hand. "I understand," he said. "Luck!" His grip said a whole lot more.

Steve turned to the squaw.

"My sister," he said in Cree, "much depends on you. This *kippawasso* must get to his friends. I leave you here, for I must return and make certain that evil bird does not get its metal wings in the air. Our little white sister may want to turn back when she learns I have gone. She *must* continue. Do I make myself understood?"

"Your words have only one meaning, brother. I will see to it."

"Even if she insists," Steve warned.

"Even then," promised the squaw.

Steve turned and jogged back the way they had come. As he dropped through the gap once more, he heard behind him the lonely wail of the big wolf-dog.

THE blizzard had reached its maturity by the time Steve finally worked his way through the alder bushes along the lake front. He was grateful for it. The driving snow would obliterate every track almost as soon as it was made. He felt terribly alone, like a man swept from a ship into an angry sea. Every step he took widened the eternal gap between Laura and himself, between reality and what might have been. By this time, he reckoned, she would be topping the hill that would take them down into the shelter of the valley. There would be another long, hard hump to work over before they hit the smooth, fast track of the river. With any sort of luck they could make it. He felt a fierce pride in them. Four of a kind: Laura, loyal to her traditions; Jim Austin, wanting only to live so that he could offer his life to his native land; Alice, who epitomized the true Indian; and old Emperor, the unconquerable.

The wind was a tide that swept him back, and it seemed hours before he was able to fight his way within sight of the plane. Now he could see tiny lights bobbing indistinctly in the driving blackness. He knew that the escape had been

discovered. It didn't matter. Pursuit would be impossible until the storm's temper subsided, and by that time, Lama and the outfit would have gained the river.

Steve cached his snowshoes behind the big rock near the lake and inched his way around the face of the hill. Behind him the wind rasped along the ice, like emery-paper on steel, to end in a crazy scream. Vagrant gusts surged over the hill and dumped drifts down from the ramparts above him. He continued doggedly, fighting not only the storm, but the lethargy of depression. A long time later, he crept into a small crevasse, less than thirty paces from the mouth of the mine.

Thirty paces in a northern blizzard is a long distance. Men have died within ten paces of a sanctuary, in storms much less severe. Steve was grateful for the wolverine fur on his parka hood; any other fur in nature will freeze and hoar up with frost. He put up his hand and tried to break the frost off his long lashes. Perhaps his eyes would not feel so heavy then.

When his aching eyes finally adjusted their focus, he could see a faint light inside the aircraft. It blinked once, as the shadow of a man cut across it. Steve could have shot him from where he crouched. But what would it avail him?

He tried to order his thoughts. He couldn't risk waiting for a chance shot at Baron Wolfgang. Twenty minutes of this cold would stiffen his hands to a point where he couldn't pull the trigger. If he attempted to wreck the plane, they would undoubtedly kill him before he accomplished much, and there was nothing he could do that they could not repair with the spare parts and the machine-shop in the mine. He wished he could be sure that Ernst had actually killed the other sled dogs; he'd meant to question the squaw about it, but in the escape he had forgotten.

He stretched out on the snow and studied the plane. The corroding acid of cold worked into his skin, and the tension was like a tight wire twisted around his chest. He saw the sentry in the plane open the door, fighting against the pressure of the wind. The man wagged his light and shouted something, but the words were whirled away on the wind. After a moment or so the man gave up and let the door blow shut.

I can't lie here much longer, Steve reflected. *My hands are beginning to feel like metal pincers already. What am I waiting for, anyhow?*

He stood up stiffly. He hadn't realized how deeply the cold had penetrated. Shaking off his mittens, he put his hands up under his parka, against the bare, warm pockets of his arm-pits. The blood tingled back into his fingers, like myriads of little needles. He jumped up and down, flexing his toes to get the circulation going. *I mustn't hesitate any longer,* he told himself.

He crawled along the edge of the culde-sac until he could approach the plane from the far side. The sentry ought to be killed, he supposed, but he was tired of slaughter. He put it off. If the man discovered him and interfered, Steve would kill him. Otherwise. . . .

Even then he had no plan. But the storm had passed its peak of fury, and in only a matter of hours the weather would be clear enough for flying. He had to do something and do it quick, for it was obvious that with the escape, Wolfgang would not risk waiting indefinitely.

He reached the tail assembly and began to examine it with his hands. German aircraft are not designed for endurance, for the *luftwaffe* operates on the principle of speed and quantity rather than excellence of construction. He found certain rudder and elevator control elements exposed and cursed himself for lack of a simple tool or two. Undoubtedly he could sabotage them, but then Wolfgang would surely discover the damage. No pilot, Steve knew, would take a ship off the ground, especially after a severe storm like this one, without carefully examining and testing the controls.

The wind tore at him with its waning savagery. It penetrated his parka and numbed his body. Once he was almost discovered, when of a sudden the door of the plane swung open and the sentry played the faltering beam of his flash aft. Luckily Steve's body was white

with snow, so that when he threw himself flat, he looked in the meager light like a small drift. The light danced over him, then vanished.

He lay full-length in the snow, and worked out the revolver he had taken from Dagor. His hands stuck to the cold metal, and he feared that if he had to shoot, he wouldn't be able to control his muscles.

But the sentry had not seen him. The man swung down out of the plane and shouted toward the mine, but the wind plucked the sound of his voice away and tossed it out of hearing. After a moment's hesitation, the sentry bent into the storm and stumbled falteringly toward the entrance of the mine.

Still without a conscious plan, Steve crawled under the ship and made his way to the door. His body demanded shelter. After that demand was satisfied he could think of something, perhaps. It might solve the problem if he lay in wait for Baron Wolfgang and shot him down in cold blood. But first he needed a measure of warmth.

He glanced toward the mine, but the sentry had vanished. Steve flexed his fingers, took a good grip on the revolver, and cautiously pried open the door.

He gave a little sob of relief as he saw there was no one else in the plane. He dragged himself inside and let the wind slam the door behind him. The meager light of the interior made it seem warm and inviting after the battering impact of the storm. A flashlight hung in a clip, so he took that and crawled aft inside the fuselage until he reached the machine-gunner's compartment. Away from the light, he could stretch in the protecting darkness and peer up at the storm beating on the glass half-dome of the gunner's window.

Again thrusting his bare hands up under his armpits to thaw them out, he settled down to wait. He thought, idly, that if the machine-gun had been loaded he might have been able to turn it on the mouth of the mine. But Wolfgang had taken no such risks.

Reaction made Steve drowsy. He tried to concentrate on the task ahead of him. In the darkness, he could picture the long line of lake freighters waiting for the valiant little ice-breakers to clear the track to the Soo. They would be trying to rush the season this year because of the war shipments. England needed the grain from those inexhaustible prairies, soldiers needed steel for

bayonets, sailors needed ships to carry grain and soldiers. Those factories of Detroit, Pittsburgh, Buffalo, Cleveland . . .

CHAPTER XIV

THE RAZOR AT THE JUGULAR

THE violent thunder of engines brought Steve awake. He sat up, startled. Through the look-out window overhead, the stars gleamed with cold whiteness against the clear sky. Incredibly, the storm was gone! The whole ship trembled until, a few moments later, the engines were synchronized.

With still aching fingers, Steve picked up his gun. Wolfgang must be planning his boasted test-flight. Steve could just hear, above the settled thunder of the powerful motors, the crisp commands. It made him smile. The Baron was mad, mad clean through. With Dagor dead, he would have to trust his bombing to one of the five mechanics, but, Steve reflected bitterly, the bomb-sight was simple enough to be almost fool-proof at low altitudes.

Steve pulled himself erect and took another look at the stars. About an hour before dawn, he judged. He grinned maliciously. Wolfgang had said he would like to take him on the test-flight. Apparently he'd get his wish. Then, when they landed, Steve would ease out and . . .

Without conscious plan Steve made his way to the plane.

He threw himself flat against the bulkhead as the intervening door opened and one of the men came into the compartment. The German was weighted down with a parachute and over each arm he had a long belt of machine-gun bullets. He flipped a switch and the compartment was flooded with an eery light. But the man did not glance around. He walked over to the gun and began to thread the bullet-belt into the breech.

The engines were revved up and the ship began to quiver restlessly, as if anxious to get in the quiet, clear air that was the aftermath of the storm. Steve exhaled softly and gingerly edged along the bulkhead until he was able to kick the door shut with his moccasin. The sound was lost in the roar of the engines. Bracing himself, he started forward. The German turned.

Steve hit him with the butt of the revolver. He sagged to his knees, then slid quietly on his face. Steve didn't like it—striking without warning that way—but he decided the time for squeamishness was past. The thick, leather helmet had broken the force of the blow, but the man was out cold.

Steve unsnapped the parachute harness, then rolling the German over, he divested him of his flying suit. In its place, he substituted his own parka. Then, as the bomber began to move slowly through the drifts toward the lake, he forced open the emergency door and dumped the Nazi out into the snow.

Donning the padded flying suit, he strapped on the parachute, and turned off the light.

The wind had blown away the lighter snow leaving the surface of the lake hard-packed and smooth as a cement runway. The bomber taxied south, then swung into position for the take-off. Once again the engines roared their chal-

lenge of power. The big ship squirmed and vibrated like an over-anxious racehorse. A moment later she began to move. Faster, faster, then the tail came up, the roughness vanished, and they were in the air! The bomber made a slow climbing turn and headed south. After a few minutes, they leveled and the engines settled to cruising speed.

Without any insulation, the din was deafening. The communications plug dangled from Steve's head-set and reminded him that at any moment Wolfgang might try talking to his gunner, and wonder why there was no reply. Steve sat in the gunner's seat, facing the compartment door, and wondered about that. Then he began to wonder why the gunner had come along at all.

A sickening premonition of disaster stole over him. He stood up and looked through the half-dome. The North Star hovered directly over the sharp edge of the rudder. Test-flight, hell! This was the real thing!

AFTER one bad moment of panic, Steve was able to regard the situation with the stoic fatalism that had carried him thus far. They were still nearly three hundred miles north of the Soo; approximately an hour's flight. And although there could be but one ending insofar as he himself was concerned, he still held all the aces. He tried to analyze the best course to follow.

Waiting was the hardest job of all. He wondered if he should barge in and surprise the bombardier in the next compartment, or if he should sit tight until the Nazis made the first move. He restrained himself with an effort.

He guessed that the bomber had already passed over Laura and Jim. Hearing it, they would think that he had failed and believe him dead. But he was grateful for the darkness that hid them from Wolfgang's rage. Obviously, the Baron had decided to blast the canal before any possible word of his plan could leak out. If it wasn't for that, Steve knew he could merely open the emergency door through which he had dumped the German gunner, and parachute to safety. He quit thinking about that, and forced his mind into more practical channels.

The stars, he noticed suddenly, were no longer bright. Dawn was only minutes away. Wolfgang must have sensed the change, for he speeded up the engines. After a while Steve risked a quick glance out his window. He saw a tiny cluster of lights and near it a moving train. He guessed that must be the town of Franz, where the Algoma and Hudson Bay railroad crossed the Canadian Pacific tracks. Or perhaps it was Hawk Junction, slightly over a hundred miles by air from the Soo. He couldn't be sure. But they were getting close!

He couldn't help wondering about the people asleep in those houses down below. The drone of the bomber would have no sound of menace to them. War was still a remote tragedy, something far away. Steve bit his lip. It might have a salutary effect if he could drop a bomb harmlessly into a pasture somewhere, blast them out of their sense of security, awaken them to reality. For hearing the big bomber they would believe it merely a Canadian patrol plane. Damn their over-confidence and complacency!

He felt the plane veer westward and took a rough bearing from the stars. They were turning out over Lake Superior to sweep in undetected by any watchers in the town below.

The door opened so abruptly that Steve was almost taken unaware. He ducked his face away from the sudden light, and watched the man who stood in the opening, bellowing at him in German. He shook his head to coax the man into the compartment, but the other simply held up the loose end of his communications phone-cord and waved it. Steve guessed that the Nazi was telling him to connect his line so that Wolfgang could talk to him. He bobbed his head and turned as if to take care of an oversight. The light vanished as the other went back to his own position.

Steve exhaled softly and turned around. This was it! They were calling his hand!

He adjusted the mouthpiece of his helmet to cover as much of his face as possible, and moved toward the door.

What happened now would have to be quick and decisive. The least grunt of the bombardier would be transmitted directly to Wolfgang through the connecting phone. Steve found that, despite the bitter cold, his hands were sweating. He shifted his gun, wiped his palms, and with a half-curse, half-prayer, slowly opened the door.

The compartment was dark. Steve paused in the opening, trying to orient himself, finally discovered the Nazi silhouetted against the bomb window in the floor. Steve padded into the compartment. Through the other doorway, he could distinguish the figure of Wolfgang at the controls. He stood there a while, undecided. Then the bomber tipped her nose, the floor sloped forward. Steve braced himself. Ahead, beyond the bombardier, beyond Wolfgang, he saw the answer—*the lights of Sault Ste. Marie!*

Steve's indecision evaporated, and it left him cool and steady. He eased forward until he stood almost directly over the bombardier. With one hand, Steve wrenched loose the phone-plug, with the other brought his gun down on the other's head. This time he was ruthless. And before he straightened, he knew intuitively the man was dead.

He hauled the Nazi away from the bomb window and took his place above the sight. Keeping a weather eye on Wolfgang, he plugged in his own phone-set. Then he looked through the window.

In the cold, gray early light, the scene below held its own peculiar grandeur. A score or more of long, heavily laden freighters lay out beyond the ice that stretched for a couple of miles into the lake from the locks. Steve could see the locks themselves in the gray distance, lying like stubby brown pencils against the blue and white background of snow and water. They were not quite ready for business, for it was apparent that the ice-breakers had not yet been able to batter their way through the ice pack.

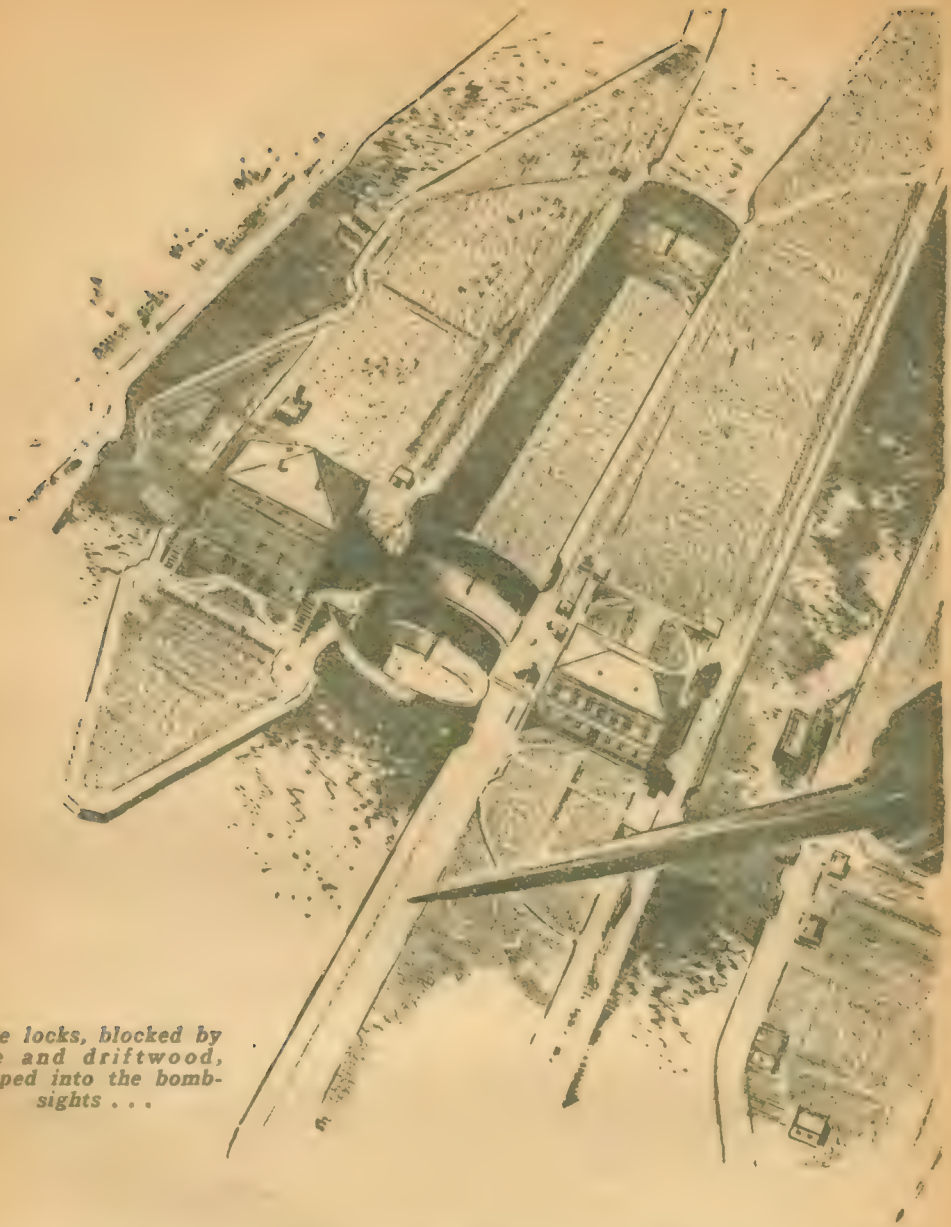
Suddenly his ear phones began to sputter as Wolfgang spoke to him. The words themselves were unintelligible to Steve, but when the same thing was repeated he gathered from the tone that Wolfgang had asked a question. He tightened his grip on his gun and risked a guttural *"Ja!"* The Baron growled something, and let it go at that.

Steve was living on borrowed time, and he knew it. Yet now the long training and rigid discipline of the Force asserted itself and his individualism was submerged and subordinated to his duty; it came to him lying there, the ability to evaluate the principles of sublimation that Laura's father and Inspector Barnett had beaten into him in spite of himself. Strangely exalted, he felt a fierce pride in the thing he was doing. He had no fear. Instead, a wild idea was gestating in his mind. Why not? Perhaps he could do it! Perhaps he could turn defeat, not just away, but into victory!

The bomber was circling, swinging in for a dive on the canal. Wolfgang began talking excitedly. Steve held his peace, and kept his eyes on the sights. The Nazi raised his voice. He wanted an answer. Steve's mouth went dry. Lying prone on the floor of that bomber was the hardest thing he had ever done. When he felt he could no longer disregard the Baron, he pushed the mouthpiece as much over his face as possible, and raised his head. The bleak, gray dawn had penetrated the bomber's interior. Steve held his breath as Wolfgang swung around and bellowed at him.

Steve gripped his revolver with his right hand. With his left, he waggled the phone-cord to suggest the connection must be broken. The Baron held up four fingers, then gestured violently downward. Then he held up two fingers, and pointed toward the little cluster of freighters a couple of miles away at the end of the solid field of ice. Steve bobbed his head vigorously. He understood well enough. Wolfgang had ordered four bombs for the Soo Canal, two more for the freighters. And he was going to have to revise his plan and dive-bomb the craft. As the Nazi swung back to his controls, Steve thrust his revolver into his belt and braced himself. The bomber poised a moment, then went into a screaming dive.

Steve lined up his sights and with



The locks, blocked by ice and driftwood, leaped into the bomb-sights . . .

steady fingers, reached for the bomb release controls.

They went roaring earthward like an angry hawk. Steve watched the canal leap into the sights. The square stone buildings with the snow still clinging, the double V-shaped locks, blocked by ice and driftwood, black ants he knew to be men scurrying about in confusion, faster, faster . . . the blood had been forced out of his head . . . faster . . . the plane threatened to tear herself to pieces . . .

He heard Wolfgang's harsh voice in his ear-phones. Now, now! Then the plane pulled out of her dive right over the center of the canal. The blood surged to Steve's head. He started to black out . . .

The canal shot under them. Steve

. . . and the plane threatened to tear herself to pieces as the canal shot under them.

couldn't see! Was that flashing grayness the last of his consciousness, or was it *ice?* He tore his eyes out of the sight and glimpsed the freighters ahead. They seemed to be jumping out of the water to meet him. Wolfgang was bawling at him again. He felt his senses slipping . . .

One . . two . . three . . four . . five . .!

He was barely aware that his fingers had acted. Craning his head backward, he saw the first of the bombs land a half mile beyond the mouth of the canal. The ice checkered queerly as a giant water-spout mushroomed out of the flow and hesitated in the air like a strange flower. He saw the other four bombs dropping in a diagonal line . . . then the freighters flashed beneath him.

Wolfgang was hauling her into the air again. Steve released his belt and struggled to his feet. The bomber went into a slow turn. Wolfgang looked back.

Whether he guessed intuitively what had happened, or whether in his rage he intended to murder a blundering compatriot, Steve had no way of knowing. In either case, the resultant action was the same. Wolfgang switched the controls over to the automatic-pilot, jerked out his automatic and fired point blank at Steve Patterson!

STEVE threw himself flat against the bulkhead and fired twice. Both shots missed! Wolfgang dropped to the floor and began to rake the metal compart-

ment with cool deliberation. His fourth shot knocked Steve's leg from under him and he fell in a heap behind the dead Nazi bombardier. It was the only thing that saved him then. He held his fire until he saw Wolfgang's head appear in the doorway. He shot once . . . and it was over!

Steve lay there a moment fighting the nausea that threatened him. As he stared into the pilot compartment, he saw the first burst of flame. One of the shots had pierced either a gas tank or punted a feed line!

By the time he dragged himself to the doorway, the pilot compartment was in flames. He knew that he could never reach the controls.

So he had failed after all! Perhaps the canal was saved, but if this flaming plane with bombs still racked was to plunge in the middle of the city. . .

He covered his face to ward off the heat and crawled aft. He wondered if he could make the emergency door before the tanks exploded.

When he finally reached the door, the heat nearly robbed him of the strength to force it open. Crouched in the opening, he seized the rudder control wires and threw his weight against them. At first there was no response, then slowly the ship swung in an arc. Without benefit of the ailerons she skidded badly. As she began to fall off in the beginning of a spin, Steve looked down. They were over the lake. He seized the rip-cord ring of his parachute . . . and jumped.

He counted four, and jerked. And then he was floating lazily in the blue.

The plane went wailing downward, like some wounded monster, leaving a trail of black smoke to mark its end. One more quick blast, and only the ripples in the cold, ice-fringed water, and the plume of smoke hovering over the spot, momentarily marked the grave of Baron Wolfgang.

Steve sagged in the harness and studied the scene below. The bombs had blasted a jagged channel in the blocked ice flow. The canal was safe, and soon the plucky terrier-like ice-breakers would complete the task he had made possible. Tiny, incredulous figures were running across the ice, unable to understand what had happened. He drifted over the freighters, where sailors were putting over boats to pick him up.

The winds carried him south, across the international boundary, over the American Soo. Steve Patterson smiled. There was no boundary here at all! He found himself humming the United States anthem he had been taught as a kid in the Canadian schools.

"My country, 'tis of thee. Sweet land of Liberty. Of thee I sing!"

THE END

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ILLUSTRATED BY
DON HEWITT

They started at daybreak from La Ciudad de los Angelos.

FRÉMONT'S CINNAMON STEEDS

A Fact Story

By

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

TODAY the Pacific Coast makes headlines in the news. Anti-aircraft guns bristle along the coastline of California. As a contrast, one may be allowed to recall a remarkable ride on horseback along that coast at a time when "the splendid idle forties" of Spanish rule were in process of change under the filibustering of Colonel John Charles Frémont. In 1843 Kit Carson had guided him across the Sierras into California. He was made Governor at the time of the Bear Flag War, and a contemporary account describes him thus, on the march:

> He was dressed in a blouse and leggings, and wore a felt hat. After him came five Delaware Indians, who were his bodyguard, and have been with him through all his wanderings; they had charge of two baggage horses. The rest, many of them blacker than the Indians, rode two and two, the rifle held by one hand across the pommel of the saddle. Thirty-nine of them are his regular men, the rest are loafers picked up lately; his original men are principally backwoodsmen, from the State of Tennessee and the banks of the upper waters of the Missouri.

In sixty days Frémont and Carson took over San Diego, San Pedro, Los Angelos (as it was then spelled), Santa Barbara, and all that country. Carson thereupon departed for Washington to tell the Government! It was during Carson's absence that Frémont per-

formed a feat of equestrianism that brings before us the famous horses to which the title above refers. We find the account imbedded in ancient files of the old *National Intelligencer and Washington Advertiser*.

TODAY, when you think how swiftly and easily a trip from Los Angeles to Monterey may be undertaken, Frémont's extraordinary ride may see slow. But then, it was no less than amazing. It was accomplished by Frémont, his friend Don Jesus Pico, and his servant Jacob Dodson. Eight hundred miles, over all, were covered at a pace that demonstrated "the power of the California horse, especially as one of the horses was subjected, in the course of the ride, to an extraordinary trial, in order to exhibit the capacity of his race."

They started at daybreak on the morning of March 22, 1847, from La Ciudad de los Angelos, and climbed by a "trace" through many defiles of mountainous country, particularly *el Rincon* or Punto Gordo pass, which wound down by the sea. They went by way of the towns of Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo and a few outlying ranches. Each man had three horses to take their turns under saddle, and the six loose ones ran ahead. When desired, either Don Jesus or the servant Jacob expertly lassoed them. None of the horses was shod, and the usual gait was a sweeping gallop. "The first day they ran one hundred and twenty-five miles, passing the San Fernando mountain, the defile of the Rincon, several other mountains, and slept at the hospitable rancho of Don Thomas Robberis, beyond the town of Santa Barbara."

Next day they accomplished the same distance, and on the formidable mountain of Santa Barbara they counted the skeletons of some fifty horses, part of a large number belonging to the California battalion, that had perished there on Christmas Day 1846, in a raging blizzard.

They reached San Luis Obispo at nine that night, where was the home of Don Jesus and where Frémont received so cordial a reception, with a breakfast of honor next morning, that it was not till 10 A.M. they got away, with eight fresh horses and a Spanish boy to tend them. They made seventy miles till eight that night, when they halted in the valley of the Salinas ("salt river," *Buena Ventura* on the old maps). Here they turned off the trace into a cañon. Near dawn they were roused by shouts from the Spanish boy and found that "white bears" had stampeded the horses. Don Jesus, however, hallooed at the bears in Spanish "and they went off." So did sleep; but the horses were recovered and a start made at daybreak. After covering another eighty miles the party made Monterey by afternoon.

After a rest of twenty-four hours they started on the return trip, and this is where the cinnamon horses really figure! These horses had been presented to Frémont in San Luis Obispo by Don Jesus. "They were brothers, one a grass

(Continued on page 125)

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet

ONLY one recruit to add to the rolls of our Writers' Brigade this month. We had never heard the name Harry Oliver till "Black Voyage" arrived in the mail one morning, and no wonder. The author writes—

This will be my first published story and I am a little bashful about appearing in Camp-Fire. The only adventures I ever had were as a youth when I drove a taxicab, or livery car as we called them then, and had a few brushes with the progenitors of our present day gangsters. I also did some trick driving, which was more exciting for my assistants and audiences than it was for me. Later, I demonstrated cars, sold them, and between times was about the poorest automobile mechanic who ever tried to talk a car into running right again. Have also been a city and traveling salesman and am currently connected with a Chicago dental supply house.

However, somewhere in my prehistoric ancestry a porpoise, or at least a fresh-water sturgeon must have played a part. For I love the water, both fresh and salt, and the ships and sailors that sail on it. Whenever I get a chance I jump a train and go to some ocean port, just to get a few days ride on it, and I once used a two weeks vacation just to ride across the ocean and back. Of course, I spend a lot of time on the Great Lakes, which are handier, either on a large ship, or my own little boat.

"Black Voyage" grew out of a hobby I started some few years ago. I noticed that the more interesting of the Great Lakes ships, especially the passenger and packet ships, were disappearing off the lakes and thought it would be nice to have a few pictures of them before they were gone. This collection has grown until I have a library, and print and photo collection of which I am quite proud. None of these things are expensive, but are darn hard to find, which makes it more interesting. It is quite remarkable that the ships and sailors of this greatest and most important body of fresh water in the world have had no contemporary herald or poet in any of its periods. When we dig out the few items we can get, we find a picture with an atmosphere all its own, although like the steamboats that sailed its green waters, these shipping days borrowed characteristics from both the rivers and the oceans. There were gamblers in the saloons, and gamblers on the bridges. Outlaws, smugglers, pirates, speculators, —all played their parts. I hope that in "Black Voyage" I have been able to give a glimpse of this atmosphere of reckless romance. The four ships, the *Superior*, the *Sheldon Thompson*, the *Henry Clay* and the *William Penn* were the only steamers on the lakes at the time the fateful voyage took place. In fact, the *Superior* was the immediate successor to the renowned *Walk-in-the-Water*, the first steamer on the lower lakes; she had the

same boilers and engines, recovered when the former ship was wrecked.

Captain Augustus Walker was quite a philosopher as well as an excellent seaman; he survived to command some of the crack steamships of later days. It is a shame that he, or some of his interesting contemporaries never wrote a book. I like a little story about him that appeared in a contemporary newspaper a few years after his voyage with Scott.

This story was recounted by an unfortunate passenger on the schooner, *Minerva* out of Buffalo. The *Minerva* was anchored inside of Long Point, having taken refuge from a hard blow, when she was boarded by the famous Captain Walker and his wife, called "Walker's Mary." Captain Walker had just put his "elegant" steamship, the *Washington* ashore and to pieces just outside the Point in this same storm, but he was still in a hurry to get to Erie. He talked the captain of the *Minerva* into proceeding. It proved to be a very bad night on Lake Erie. Captain Walker took over, saved some of her canvas and got her into Dunkirk. Everybody aboard joined in praising Captain Walker and congratulating him on his splendid seamanship in bringing her in. However, the above passenger ended his story with the wry comment "if he had not been aboard, we were lost with no chance in our favor, but if he had not been aboard, we should have not been here, but safely swinging to anchor behind the Point."

Gordon Grant, the noted marine illustrator, whose own collection of reference material on ships and shipping is marvelously complete, found himself stumped on some matters of detail when he started to make the drawings for "Black Voyage." We wired Mr. Oliver and by return air mail came a batch of old prints and data from his Great Lakes file which were just what the artist needed. We're already plotting to bring the two gentlemen together again in "Nightly to Milwaukee," which has a modern background and disabused us completely of any pessimistic ideas we had that Mr. Oliver might be another one of those "one-story" authors. It'll be along shortly, with pix by G. G.

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT, contributing editor of *The Saturday Review of Literature* and Stephen Vincent's brother, hasn't been with us since November '33 when his "Ballad of the Blunderbuss" appeared in these pages. "Frémont's Cinnamon Steeds" makes a fine addition, we think, to our dossier of historic records of horsemanship which began with Sherman Baker's "The World's Fastest Horseman" a year ago last month and included Walter Livingston's "Riders East" in the December issue. Comment on the latter article continues to pile up as witness the following amusing item which appeared in a recent issue of the Hutchinson (Kansas) News under the headline "Famous Race Tale Garbled."

"It's a lowdown, outrageous lie," snorts James H. (Rattlesnake Pete) Stephens of Hutchinson, rereading an article from last December's "Adventure" magazine now condensed in April "Reader's Digest," reporting he shared whiskey with his cayuse in the famous 1,000-mile horse race of 1893, and "left their race in the bottom of the bottle."

Stephens brandished his scissors today at his one-chair home barber shop, 1527 North Washington, as if to say he'd like to cut the pages out of the magazine and perhaps give the author, a Walter Livingston, an extra close shave.

Rattlesnake Pete at 78 is still stout enough to work every day in his barbershop and to tend a big garden, and he is able—he announced—to "take this to a lawyer and make them print a correction." Glancing over the story he shrugged with disgust and asserted, "I never poured whiskey down a horse in my life—you'd have to throw him and hog tie him to do that."

Many details recalled in the magazine piece are true, but some particulars of the two-week overland jaunt from Chadron, Nebr., to Chicago are "all wet," Stephens complained.

The "Digest" version lists four riders, John Berry, Joe Gillispie, C. W. Smith and J. E. Albright, as completing the race.

"That's all wrong," asserted Stephens. "Berry was disqualified because he helped lay out the route, and I got in

★ ★
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about the same time as Joe Gillispie. I and Joe Gillispie and Doc Middleton split the prize money three ways. I got $333.33. Buffalo Bill Cody was going to give $500 more to the prize money, but I don't think he ever did."

Stephens said the prize money was split because of an agreement forced on him by Gillispie and Middleton in the sandhills of Nebraska.

"They thought I was going to win, so they stopped me and told me they were going to decide right then if any of us three won we would split the money with the other two. They were really tough men, I was just a kid. There wasn't anything else I could do."

Nine riders started the race, a sensation of its day. Instigated by the Chadron weekly newspaper editor, who was fond of contending western horseflesh was superior to eastern turf stock, it attracted nationwide attention. It was a gruelling endurance test. Stephens said the longest period he stopped to rest was seven hours. He used two horses.

The magazine article says a Chicago newspaper reporter mounted on a bicycle followed Berry, reported winner of the race, from Waterloo, Ia., to Chicago, except for occasional stops to drop off dispatches.

"It was me he followed on the bicycle," Stephens said. "They've got it all wrong. The reporter's name was George Jones.

"And the time they gave for Berry, 13 days and 16 hours, was my time," Rattlesnake Pete added. "They got it mixed up."

Stephens believes he is the only one of the race riders living.

"Doc Middleton was here to see me in 1926, and Joe Gillispie was here once, but I think they're dead and gone now."

Stephens told how he came by his nickname. After riding to Chadron from Ness City, his former home, he stayed with Sheriff Jim Dahlman, later mayor of Omaha, a famous westerner who died a few years ago at Excelsior Springs, Mo. Mrs. Dahlman made him a hatband decorated with rattles of 72 snakes killed by her sons.

"They started calling me Rattlesnake Pete and the name's stayed with me ever since."

Stephens has a large picture of himself on his horse, General Grant, hanging in his barbershop. In those days, 49 years ago, he sported a big, black handlebar mustache.

We are indebted to Mr. Elliott Penner of the staff of the Hutchinson News and the author of the above for letting us see his column. And we think "Rattlesnake Pete" ought to get acquainted with Mrs. Berrie Bond Van Natta of Casper, Wyoming, maternal granddaughter of John Berry, the winner (?) of the race, who wrote to tell us how many times she had sat at her granddad's knee as a child and listened to him tell about his famous ride. Author Livingston is in the army now but we'll be glad to receive further claims in regard to that fabulous gallop and forward them to him.

And speaking of Casper, Wyoming, we wonder if Mrs. Van Natta knows young Mr. Edwin Gothberg who climbed aboard his horse Trigger one day a few months ago in Casper and 75 days and three sets of horseshoes later arrived in San Francisco, 1,500 miles away. "I wanted to find out what the oldtimers went through when they made their way to the Pacific Coast," he reported. Only the last seven miles of the way did horse and rider both ride when they had to be packed into a trailer to cross the San Francisco Bay Bridge.

Incidentally, Mr. Benét, the author of the current bit on fast horses, who, as we go to press, has just been announced as the Pulitzer Prize winner for his volume of verse, "The Dust Which Is God," promises us another ballad one of these days. Hope it won't be too long a wait.

WHENEVER a letter with "Teejay" up in the corner of the envelope comes in addressed to this department we can be pretty certain the sparks are going to fly. The old-time reader who signs himself that way has been a loyal *Adventure* fan since Vol. 1 No. 1 and we'd hate to have the day come round when he started pulling his punches and not bothering to give us his comment and criticism when he thinks he's spotted an error. That time hasn't arrived yet as you can see from the following—

> I never heard of a "Hawkins" rifle. The famous Kentucky rifles which enabled Jackson to slaughter Pakenham's Britons at New Orleans (imagine walking up to men behind cotton bales who could pick off a squirrel in the tallest tree!) were made in several small shops

between Lebanon and Philadelphia, butts and forehands in one, barrels in another, locks in a third, and then sent to what is now Marion, to the assembly shop of Jacob and Samuel Hauken, who had branch stores in Louisville and St. Louis. At Merion, they were bored, aligned and rifled, the wood parts fitted, sights justified, and locks adjusted. The flintlocks were the first of the "hair triggers," succeeded by the cap.

They were packed over the Cumberland Gap to the Ohio, then floated downriver to Louisville and St. Louis, in both of which towns Hauken's was the rendezvous for all marksmen. My fourth great-grandfather, Enfield Johnstone, led the Knights of the Golden Fleece over the Gap to Kentucky, and he and his wife were parties to the first all-white marriage in the "dark and bloody ground."

In the last years of the Civil War, Seth Kinnan, Kit Carson and Jim Bridger brought to Washington delegations of Indians to make the treaties our government so shamelessly violated. I only saw Jim once, a gaunt frontiersman, with a gray beard; Kit dressed in civies, was heavy and dark; Seth was there some weeks and I got to know him well as he loved children. They all used Haukens, about six feet tall and the wooden forehand nearly reached the muzzle. Hauken wouldn't sell to the Indians, even if they piled pelts to the top of the gun.

Seth used to trace the outline of a silver 3c piece, about ⅝ inch, on a sheet of paper and tack it on a tree at 40 yds. or so, and put a bullet through it. The caliber was about .33, as I judge now, but it is 75 years or more ago. Seth wore buckskin and a fur cap (in a Washington April!) and one day let me look on while he cleaned his gun. He used vinegar and water, then soda, and dried and oiled the barrels. The barrel was dismounted, and he showed me the powder-chamber, which was bottlenecked. The bullets were present ogive-headed ones, and weighed about 200 grains, being said to be 32 to a pound. But it is Hauken, not Hawkins.

Nevertheless, the story was a good one.

Teejay
Thomas J. Johnstone
51 Hamilton Place
New York, N. Y.

Teejay's letter refers, of course to L. L. Foreman's "Hell and Hawkins" which appeared in the May issue. The author lives in New Mexico and there hasn't been time yet to get an answer back from him on the Hawkins-Hauken-Hawkens controversy. Yes, *Hawkens* is going to have to be considered too, for we've done a little digging on our own in Capt. Dillon's "The Kentucky Rifle" and elsewhere and find that Kit Carson's rifle, now in Montezuma Lodge in Taos, N. M. was made by Jacob Hawkens (spelled with an *e*). Also we are on the trail of an obscure early Pennsylvania gunsmith named Hawkins, first name unknown, spelled with an *i*. Anyone else got anything to contribute while we're waiting to hear from Mr. Foreman?

VICTOR SHAW, our *Ask Adventure* mining and prospecting expert, writes from Los Angeles—

I find the various accounts on the "black widow" in our May *Camp-Fire* of considerable interest, too; chiefly, perhaps, for the reason that we've slews of 'em hereabouts. The general opinion seems to be (here), one of watchful indifference, if I know what I mean.

They're exterminated here rather easily by destroying their egg-bags, in the webs they spin in dark corners of old sheds, little used garages on rear of lots, etc.

Please note this point, however: Concerning the black widow spider in Arizona, where they are numerous in the southerly portion of the State, C. T. Vorhies, Professor of Entomology in Univ. of Arizona, states that of all the so-called poisonous insects in this state there is but one that may be considered truly so; i.e. the black widow spider. Of this, I quote:

"Stings of scorpion are not dangerous to adult persons . . . less painful than sting of common honey bee. At times dangerous for small children.

"The tarantula bite . . . is not very painful, nor dangerous. Trouble is usually secondary germ infection.

"Vinegarones are non-poisonous and harmless.

"The black widow (shoe button) spider is a really poisonous species. It is jet black, shiny, body size of a pea, or shoe button, and has an hour-glass shaped red mark on its belly. First aid treatment and care of physician is needed in case of a bite by this spider. I make no recommendations as to treatment of the bite of this insect."

AND here is some additional testimony to the record on high-crawling rattlesnakes.

Camp-Fire for April had a few words on rattlesnakes in the mountains. Here are a few more:

In 1920 I killed a rattler in John D. Allen's back yard at the mouth of Garden Creek canyon, 8 miles south of Casper, Wyo. Elevation 6,600 feet. A few days later I killed another at the head of the canyon, elevation 7,200 feet. While I was there Mr. Allen killed two while inspecting his alfalfa, which was not yet ready to cut. There were a good many garter snakes around.

In 1938 I killed four in Water Creek canyon, altitude 6,400 feet, some 40 miles north of Ely, Nevada, in White Pine county. My partner, Otto Jensen, who stayed at the camp about half the year, had killed several. There were present a large number of harmless snakes which wanted to be pally.

All the rattlesnakes had side-winder habits. I did not hear one sound his rattles, nor see one coiled. Those that had a chance struck sideways, twisting the body. All were 20 to 24 inches long, 4, 5 or 6 pairs rattles.

M. H. Van H. Battenberg.
6143 Kimbark Ave.,
Chicago, Ill.

Aside: Snakes live where they can find food. Rattlesnakes live largely on field mice. Field mice are vegetarians when the bacon is hung by a wire 4 feet above the floor. In the mountains a spring of water and a patch of vegetation are necessary for a colony of field mice. That makes a good camping spot, and such "are rarely found at an altitude above 5,000 feet."

M. H. Van H. B.

IT'D be pretty silly for a monthly magazine such as *Adventure* to try to beat, or even keep up with the headlines in the daily papers in an attempt to time its fiction to the news. However, once in a while, circumstances are such that we don't fall too far behind the times despite the rapidity with which conditions shift these days. For instance, we'd no sooner made plans to publish "5,000 Trojan Horses" than the Soo Canal began to be front-page news in the daily press and it's stayed there right along. Leslie T. White, in a brief additional note about his story says—

Military experts admit that there is a distinct possibility of a continental attack on Canada and this country through the northern approaches, and one has only to travel through the vast, limitless spaces of the Ontario wilderness to recognize the danger and vulnerability.

Obviously the plane cache at Little Loon is fiction (I hope). But when I was in the Brazilian jungles last year, I heard rumors of such caches there, which had been prepared for similar attack bases on another canal. It's something to think about. And all too few Americans and Canadians realize the tremendous importance of the Soo. Or know that the canals there handle more tonnage than Panama and Suez combined. Tonnage of a type that is of paramount importance to our war effort today.

March 23rd last the papers carried stories heralding the earliest opening of ore movements on the Great Lakes in years and announced that ice breakers were busy breaking channels in ports where ore is loaded. Weather conditions favored an unusually early shipping season and record tonnages were expected.

April 8th papers carried the news that some 80 Great Lakes ore freighters, laden with the raw materials from which guns and tanks will be fashioned, were trapped in an ice field above the Soo which had broken away from the shore after the earliest opening of the shipping season on record. The Coast Guard appealed for extra help in clearing a path for the freighters to the locks.

A few days later papers carried pictures of the first barrage balloon to be raised above the St. Mary's River and Soo Canal to help protect ore shipments to Eastern and Midwestern steel mills.

And within the last month President Roosevelt signed a bill to make available $8,000,000 for construction of a new auxiliary lock at the Soo. An "accident" to the canals at Sault Ste. Marie would cut the nation's steel mills off from 85% of their basic raw material. To say nothing of the wheat from the largest elevators in the world at Port Arthur and Fort William on the north shore of Superior.

Yes, the Soo is important these days. Let's take care of it!—K.S.W.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or chance. Give your own name and full address. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to *Lost Trails* will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and for women are declined, as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *Adventure* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or for any other reason in the judgment of the editorial staff. **No charge is made for publication of notices.**

Would like to contact my cousin, Edwin F. Rowe, last heard of in Canton, Ohio, in 1912. At that time weighed 250 lbs., was working in a furnishing store as salesman; would be about 68 years old if living, probably in Ohio. C. Earl Drumm, County Home, Ebensburg, Pa.

Would like to get in touch with Preston Hurd who was formerly stationed at Albrook Field in the Canal Zone. Robert Owen, 103 Shultas Place, Hartford, Conn.

Would like to contact Hez or Robert Montgomery. Their mother, Mattie, in 1926 operated the Ivy Hotel, 30 North Fair Oaks Ave., Pasadena. Also, Chum McComb who in 1917 was employed by A. B. Perkins & Co., wholesale produce, 3d & Water Sts., Bay City, Mich. Frank G. Batchelor, Room 312, 115 East 3d St., Los Angeles, Cal.

Would like to hear from members of the Northern Pacific Ry. civil engineer group with whom I served at Trout Creek, Montana, under A. C. Terril, during year 1908. Among them, Leigh Adkins, Henry Aldrich, Carl Bohland. Communicate with D. C. Corle, 600 Ninth Ave., Mount Dora, Fla.

Would like to hear from Eddie Conlon, who was in the infantry in Panama in 1939 and came back early in 1940. L. E. Hilliard, 45 Summer St., Manchester, Mass.

Edward R. Wilson, about 60, civil engineer, mining expert, ex-Ordnance officer. Last heard of, Prineville, Ore., spring of 1940. Word will be appreciated by Jack Horsfoll, Rock Creek Blvd., Nashville, Ore.

Armdie A. St. John, living in Haverhill, Mass., in the summer of 1913. Anyone knowing his whereabouts, kindly communicate with Arthur "Gene" Hicks, Middlesex St., Bradford, Mass., c/o Miss E. Hicks.

Bert Oldham: Major Travis' widow desires to contact Marguerite Bean. Please write, or have her write to Mrs. J. J. Travis, 134 High St., Tonbridge, Kent, England; or communicate through me if you prefer. J. K. Bodler, Lt. (j.g.) U.S.N.R., U.S.S. *Regulus*, c/o Postmaster, San Francisco, Cal.

Veteran William Daniel disappeared May, 1921, from the home of his parents, 4501-4th Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y. Served as corporal, Battery D, 62nd Field Artillery; was honorably discharged Dec. 31, 1918, a private, 314 Cavalry, Camp Owen, Texas. Last seen in Los Angeles, 1921. Was a licensed radio operator, had been a jockey, and had made several trips to Central and South America, as a seaman. Anyone knowing his whereabouts, please communicate with Veterans Administration, Washington, D. C., giving reference number XC-2,985,049.

Would like to contact any members of Battery C, 43rd Coast Artillery Corps from Camp Eustin, Va., from Jan. 1, 1921 to July 2, 1921. My father, Clifford V. St. Clair, was in that Battery, and I am hoping some of the members have seen him or know of his whereabouts. Please communicate with his son, whom he never saw, L. G. St. St. Clair, 2365 Sutter St., San Francisco, Cal.

82nd Division Veterans contact your Association at 28 East 39 Street, New York City. Elwood C. Ellinger, Secretary.

Would like to establish contact with John Henry "Mickey" McGuire and Harold "Rube" Gordon with whom I was in recruit camp at Langley Field, Va., in November, 1939. Write P.F.C. William M. Bell, Jr., c/o *Adventure*.

Notice in April Lost Trails placed by P.F.C. William M. Bell, Jr. to locate two friends, one of them John Henry ("Mickey") McGuire has brought a response from Miss Natalie Zirkle of New Market, Va. She has made available to Private Bell not only his friend McGuire's address, in Hawaii, but also a clipping from the New Market (Va.) Valley, which prints a letter from Mickey: "Since I wrote you, I've been promoted to Sergeant and am very proud of my new rating," he says. Now if someone will just round up "Rube" Gordon we can cross out the other half of the item.

(Continued from page 118)

younger than the other, both of the same color, (cinnamon,) and hence called *el cañalo, or los cañalos*, (the cinnamon or the cinnamons.) The elder was to be taken for the trial."

THEY left Monterey with afternoon well advanced and did thirty miles before they stopped for the night. In the morning the elder *cañalo* was again under saddle for Frémont. In the exact words of the *Intelligencer:*

> For ninety miles he carried him without change, and without apparent fatigue. It was still thirty miles to San Luis Obispo, where the night was to be passed, and Don Jesus insisted that *cañalo* could do it. But Col. Frémont would not put him to the trial, and, shifting the saddle to the younger brother, the elder was turned loose to run the remaining thirty miles without a rider. He did so, immediately taking the lead and keeping it all the way, and entering San Luis in a sweeping gallop, nostrils distended, snuffing the air, and neighing with exultation at his return to his native pastures; his younger brother all the time at the head of the horses under the saddle. The whole eight horses made their one hundred and twenty miles each that day, (after thirty the evening before,) the elder cinnamon making ninety of his under the saddle that day, besides thirty under the saddle the evening before.

After a half-day at San Luis Obispo, the journey was finished on the same nine horses which the men had originally ridden to that place, and the ride back was made at the rate of 125 miles a day! The narrative ends with a comment on horses trained and domesticated, as were the *cañalos:*

> They eat [says the *Intelligencer*] almost anything of vegetable food, or even drink, that their master uses, by whom they are petted and caressed, and rarely sold. Bread, fruit, sugar, coffee, and even wine, (like the Persian horses,) they take from the hand of their master, and obey with like docility his slightest intimation. A tap of the whip on the saddle, springs them into action; the check of a thread rein (as in Spanish bit) would stop them; and stopping short at speed they do not jostle the rider or throw him forward. They leap on anything—man, beast, or weapon, on which their master directs them.

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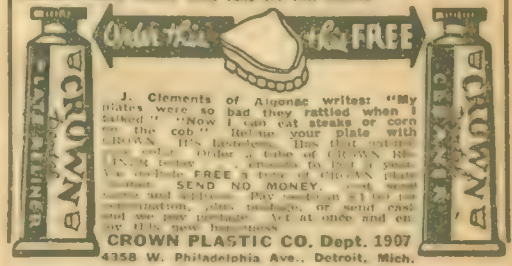

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Notice: Many of our *Ask Adventure* experts are now engaged in government service of one kind or another. Some are on active duty in the Army or Navy, others serving in an executive or advisory capacity on various of the boards and offices which have been set up to hasten the nation's war effort. Almost without exception these men have consented to remain on our staff, carry on their work for the magazine if humanly possible, but with the understanding that for the duration such work is of secondary importance to their official duties. This is as it should be, so when you don't receive answers to queries as promptly as you have in the past please be patient. And remember that foreign mails are slow and uncertain these days, many curtailed drastically. Bear with us and we'll continue to try to serve you as speedily as possible.

ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS

SPORTS AND HOBBIES

Archery—EARL B. POWELL, care of *Adventure*.

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, care of *Adventure*.

Basketball—STANLEY CARHART, 99 Broad St., Matawan, N. J.

Boxing—MAJOR JEAN V. GROMBACH, Headquarters, 27th Div., Fort McClellan, Ala.

Camping—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Canoeing: *paddling, sailing, cruising, regattas*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 1325 So. Main St., Princeton, Ill.

Coins *and Medals*—WILLIAM L. CLARK, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., N. Y. C.

Dogs—FREEMAN LLOYD, care of *Adventure*.

Fencing—MAJOR JEAN V. GROMBACH, Headquarters, 27th Div., Fort McClellan, Ala.

First Aid—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure*.

Fishing: *fresh water; fly and bait casting; bait; camping outfits; fishing trips*—JOHN ALDEN KNIGHT, 929 W. 4th St., Williamsport, Penna.

Fishing: *salt water, bottom fishing, surf casting; trolling; equipment and locations*—C. BLACKBURN MILLNE, care of *Adventure*.

Globe-trotting and vagabonding — ROBERT SPIERS BENJAMIN, care of *Adventure*.

Health Building Activities, Hiking — DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure*.

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motorcycling—*regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, 70 Colonial Sq., Burlington, Vt.

Mountain Climbing—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 952 No. Hudson Av., Hollywood, Calif.

Old Songs—ROBERT WHITE, 913 W. 7th St., Los Angeles, Calif.

Old-Time Sailoring—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *foreign and American*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, 170 Liberty Rd., Salem, Oregon.

★Skiing and Snowshoeing — W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec, Can.

Small Boating: *skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y. C.

Swords: *spears, pole arms and armor*—CAPT. R. E. GARDNER, care of *Adventure*.

Tournament Fly and Bait Casting—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 1, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—MUREL E. THRUSH, New York Athletic Club, New York City.

Yachting—A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Pl., Chicago, Ill.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American, north of the Panama Canal, customs, dress, architecture; pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Aviation: *airplanes, airships, airways and landing fields, contests, aero clubs, insurance, laws, licenses, operating data, schools, foreign activities, publications, parachutes, gliders* — MAJOR FALK HARMEL, 709 Longfellow St., Washington, D. C.

Big Game Hunting: *guides and equipment*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Entomology: *insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Pa.

Forestry: *in the United States, national forests of the Rocky Mountain States*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry: *tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, 1091 Springdale Rd., Atlanta, Ga.

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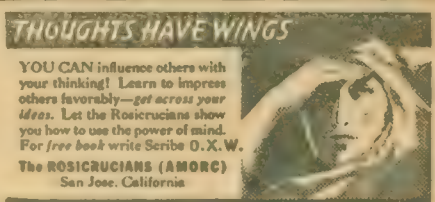
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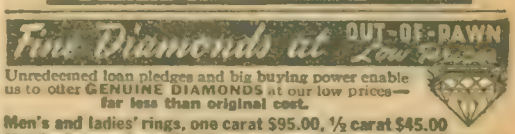
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Railroads: *in the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Pitts, Ill.

Sawmilling—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure*.

Taxidermy—EDWARD B. LANG, 156 Joralemon St., Belleville, N. J

Wildcrafting and Trapping — RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE

Field Artillery, *the Cavalry Arm, Equitation and training of horses*—FAIRFAX DOWNEY, care of *Adventure*.

Federal Investigation Activities: *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, 43 Elm Pl., Red Bank, N. J.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—ALEC CAVADAS, King Edw., H. S., Vancouver, B. C.

State Police—FRANCIS H. BENT, 43 Elm Pl., Red Bank, N. J.

U. S. Marine Corps—MAJOR F. W. HOPKINS, care of *Adventure*.

U. S. Navy—LIEUT. DURAND KIEFER, care of *Adventure*.

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

Philippine Islands—BUCK CONNER, Conner Field, Quartzsite, Ariz.

★New Guinea—L. P. B. ARMIT, care of *Adventure*.

★New Zealand: Cook Island, Samoa—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★Australia and Tasmania—ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge St., Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

★South Sea Islands—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, "Ingle Nook," 39 Cornelia St., Wiley Park, N. S. W.

Hawaii—JOHN SNELL, Deputy Administrator, Defense Savings Staff, 1055 Bishop St., Honolulu, Hawaii.

Madagascar—RALPH LINTON, Dept. of Anthropology, Columbia University, New York City.

Africa, Part 1 ★*Libya, Morocco, Egypt, Tunis, Algeria, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. 2 *Abyssinia, Italian Somaliland, British Somali Coast Protectorate, Eritrea, Liberia, Portuguese Africa*—GORDON MACCREAGH, 2251 W. Hudson Drive, St. Petersburg, Florida. 3 *Tripoli, Sahara caravans*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure*. 4 *Bechuanaland, Southwest Africa, Angola, Belgian Congo, Egyptian Sudan and French West Africa*—MAJOR S. L. GLENISTER, care of *Adventure*. 5 ★*Cape Province, Orange Free State, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal, Rhodesia*—PETER FRANKLIN, Box 1491 Durban, Natal, So. Africa.

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Baffinland and Greenland — VICTOR SHAW, 11628½ Mayfield Av., West Los Angeles, Calif.

Labrador—WILMOT T. DEBELL, Severna Park Md.

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Alaska—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 952 No. Hudson ave., Hollywood, Calif.

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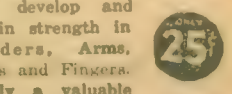

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